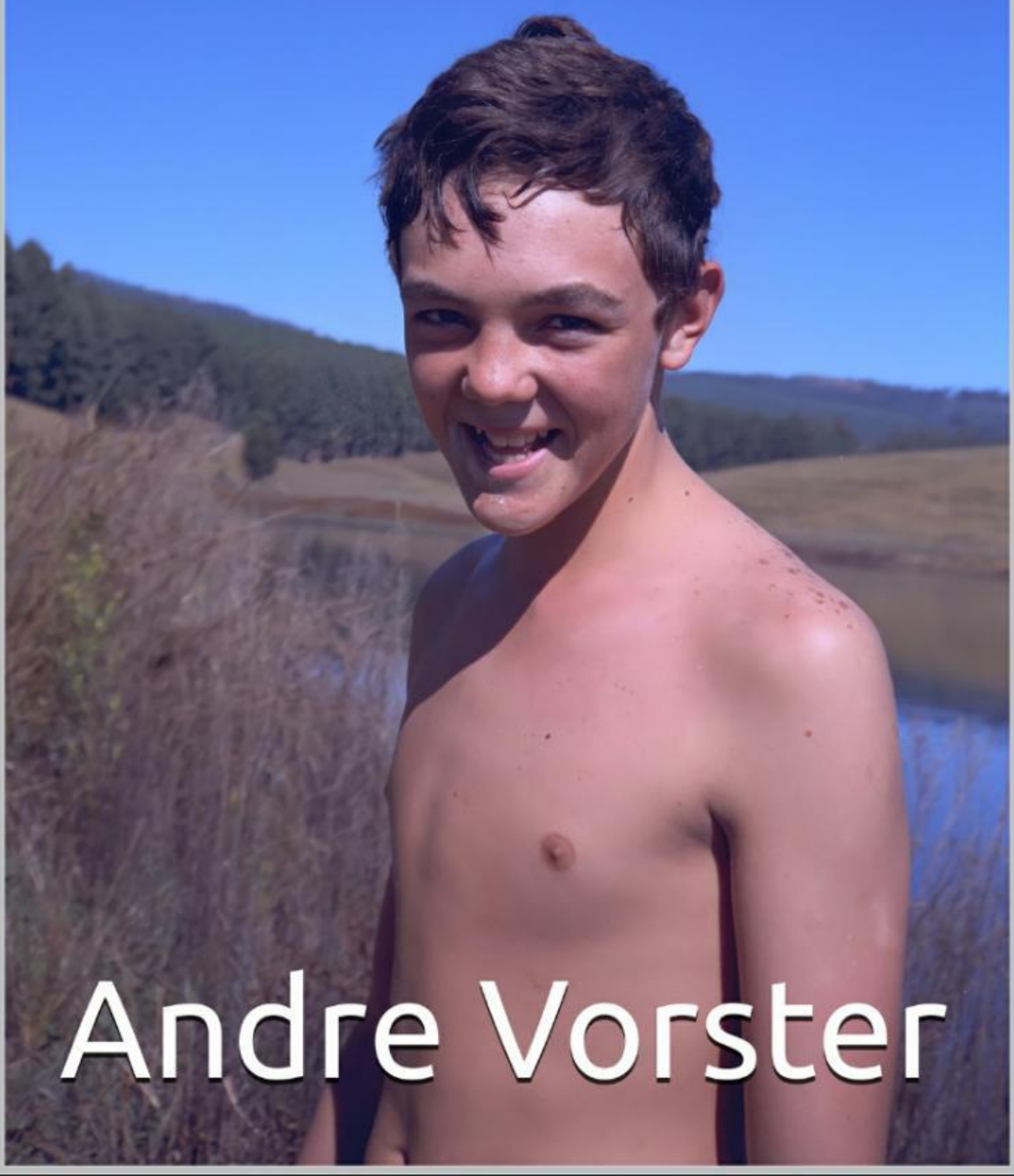
Walk a Mile in my Shoes



Andre Vorster

Walk a Mile in my Shoes

Andre Vorster

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WALK A MILE IN MY SHOES: Back Cover Text
South African Police Officer (1988 - 2003)

The autobiography of a South African policeman, published posthumously as he instructed.

Part One is the timeline of his life, attending Naval Cadets in his high school years and joining the police – as a dare? – as an alternative to national service in the army. He served most of his time in Natal Province, now Kwa-Zulu Natal, having trained and worked as a detective after a stint on the South West Africa border with KOEVOET in the Border War. He worked mostly in rural communities, in the Murder and Robbery Unit and Unrest and Violent Crime Investigation Unit. He acknowledges not always having gone by the book and having been heavy-handed at times. He left after repeated trauma, some described in this book, and with no longer fitting the New South Africa.

Part Two comprises novelisations of several of his experiences. In this section, he steps out of the first-person narrative and explores the prospects of different characters, including some despicable ones. Some names have been changed, and some events may have been embellished.

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Publisher's Note

Andre Vorster
5 June 1968 – 7 October 2021
South African Police Officer (1988 - 2003)

The author entrusted this manuscript to me with the stipulation that it not be published while he lived. Sadly, he has now passed away. He told me that he had written it for his children to learn about his life and to understand him better.

Much of his writing style is familiar from formal police writing. I was interested in his portrayals of the police world; the police families and networking outside of formal employment. He introduces a character called `Colonel Vossie'. I knew Andre was called Vossie, but I'm sure the character he describes is not meant to be him. He changed his surname in the last decade or so of his life.

Parts of this book, in style and some subject matter, are reminiscent of Jacques Malan's (2010) `**Little Ice Cream Boy**' and similar to `**The Boberg Story**' (1957) for the number of case adventures written up.

Almost all of the names have been changed.

Part one is what Andre presents as his autobiography following the timeline. Part two is fictionalised and, at times, difficult to follow. He refers to the eventual suicide of `Jan' in part one, though he only tells Jan's story in part two, and changes perspectives to different narrators involved in the same case. Having the option of not publishing part two, I decided to publish it anyway – there is good and thought-provoking material there – and for readers to decide whether to read it - or not. The autobiography can stand alone, whereas the fictionalised part two cannot.

The cover photo is one I took of Andre on a hike at Cedara College of Agriculture on 9 May 1982. It is after his Saldanha Bay adventure with the Naval Cadets but before his fall and well before his police career, which forms the bulk of this book. Did he know what lay ahead of him? How could he? I don't have a

more suitable photo of him while he was in the police. My choice was either to depict him as a 13-year-old or not to use a photo.

Andre had a round face and a round head. My girlfriend said he looked like Tintin.

SPOILER ALERT:

I met Andre when he was in naval cadets. Andre's description of joining Naval cadets, with it being the first step to joining the Navy; this was far less formal than he describes. It didn't involve any more commitment than joining Scouts, which was an alternative at the time and from which one could leave at any time. There was the rumour which the naval cadet company, TS Assegai promulgated, that service in the cadets could lead one to being called up to do one's national service in the Navy. This was not guaranteed.

Andre attended a two-week course for naval cadets at the Saldanha Bay Naval Base, organised by the South African Navy. He was one of about 10 cadets from TS Assegai, male and female, sent down for the course, so he was not quite as unique as he portrays. He gave me specific permission to quote his account of `Deep Heat' in **Boys Don't Tell** (2021a).

Andre was the first investigating officer in the murder of Bruce David Mack (1971 - 1999) in Highflats, Ixopo, KZN, on 11th October 1999. In his book, Andre changed the name to `McKenzie'.

"Dr Viljoen aka Dr Anton Potgieter"

When I read of his experience at Santon Clinic, and his meeting with `Dr Viljoen', this started to ring bells immediately. Andre confirmed that his Dr Viljoen was, in fact, Dr Anton Potgieter, who had been the head of the Department of Psychiatry for the two years when I had worked there (1 Mil: 2021b), and although somewhat in awe of Dr Potgieter, I remembered him well. By the time Andre met him, he had left the military. He was involved in the assessment treatment and writing of reports suggesting or supporting medically boarding police officers due to post-traumatic stress disorder they had suffered from. It is a matter of record, as Andre finds out, that allegations of fraud were made

against Dr Potgieter, that he was overcharging the police medical aids. I was very surprised – possibly somewhat sceptical – of Andre's reports of his treatment, with some aspects being more reminiscent of **One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest** (1962) than the psychiatry department at one military hospital where Potgieter had worked several years before. I found it bizarre, and possibly poetic licence, that Andre reports that as he did not appear to have made any improvement in the post-traumatic stress disorder within a couple of days, Dr Potgieter recommended that he receive shock treatment, more professionally known as electroconvulsive therapy. I witnessed this once, in 1987, when I was invited to do so due to its infrequency, by the psychiatrist on the team I worked on, where it was seen to be pretty much the treatment of last resort for people with severe depression, so Andre strains the credibility somewhat suggesting that this would have been offered to him within a couple of days, and also as general good medical practice he would have needed to have been under a general anaesthetic at the time, so this is extremely unlikely to have been performed by Dr Potgieter on his own, without the presence and active involvement of a consultant anaesthetist. There are several medical consultants with the same name, including a maxillary facial surgeon. While Dr Potgieter appeared to be happily married when I knew him, later he came out as gay and developed a relationship with a young clinical psychologist who I think was convicted of his murder. Very sad.

"Michael"

In his autobiography, late looking back on his career, Andre says that he `cracked the biggest mystery involving child abduction and trafficking', but he does not describe this in the timeline of his autobiography. I suspect it might be the inspiration for his main novelisation in Book II, where the heroic investigating officer is `Ozzie', Michael is the 9-year-old boy, and the non-commendable father is Jan. Initially, I thought that he hadn't concluded the story, but on reflection and re-reading, I think that he has. If I had the opportunity, I would ask Andre to spell it out more clearly. I can understand the last reference to Michael missing his Mom, but I suspect he would have felt less affection

for his father if he comprehended his father, Jan's role in this story.

When I asked Andre, he was amused by my inquiry and hinted at a connection to or inspiration from the Gert van Rooyen and Joey Haarhoff case; they were active in 1988/89 and died in 1990 —too early in his career for him to have been involved. Similarities were the figure of about seven missing girls, that their bodies were never found, an alleged (Kwa-Zulu) Natal connection, and the character Yolande shared the name with one of their actual (alleged) victims.

"Flippie van Rooyen[1], the son of Gert van Rooyen, has alleged […] that they had been taken to the Middle East. He has also alleged that three former National Party (NP) ministers were involved in a child smuggling network with his father that involved selling girls for cash."

The conspiracy theory put forward by van Rooyen's son predates the 2018 `**Boys of Bird Island**' expose, promptly retracted, though I'd heard of disgruntled or disgusted helicopter pilots being unhappy in making such flights before then. And then, of course, there has been the more recent Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell mystery. Could there have been a conspiracy? Stranger things have happened.

[1] https://www.sahistory.org.za/dated-event/paedophile-gert-van-rooyen-and-mistress-commit-suicide)

Preface

An essay Andre wrote in his last year of Primary School.

MY Life By Andre Vorster

I was born in a little town named Perdekop in the Transvaal. Just before I was born, the doctors thought I would die. They did not take much care and just pulled me out. Still to this day I have the mark on my forehead. They rushed me to an incubator for a few days. When I came out [was born] I was four and a half pounds. My mother and father were living in a caravan, at the time could not afford a cot, so they put me in a shoe-box with cotton wool; [Photo]. At the age of two we went to Rhodesia for a wedding. My father, mother and myself are in the next photo. On the same trip we visited the Victoria Falls and I was fascinated by the huge statues. The next photo shows me at Livingstone's feet. We went by boat up the Zambezi to an Island where were hundreds of monkeys. The next photo shows me with my friends – [Photo of Vossie with monkeys] In the same holiday we got a little cottage and the wild pigs used to come right to our doorstep as shown in the next photo. (Photo) The one on the left is my grandfather.

It was lovely growing up in a farming area. We used to come down to P.M.B. often to visit my grandfather and mother. This (Photo) is me with my grandfather's hat. I started going to nursery school at the age of three and had to travel 32 km (one way) to get there. I sang in my first Choir at the age of four and a half. I went to an Afrikaans school for my first year, because it was the only school in the district. So after a year my mom got a transfer to a little town. There was a school for English and Afrikaans. In Std. 2 I went to two schools and did not enjoy that year. I came to Merchiston and I played rugby for the first time in my life and was chosen for under 10A.

In Std. 4 I play soccer. I don't know why, but I did. I have no photo to show. Now I am in Std. V and I play a few sports.

I want to become a doctor and when I go to the Navy I [want to] become a medic.

PART ONE

Autobiography

A few weeks after my twelfth birthday, I arrived home from school after the usual rugby practice and the thirteen-kilometre uphill cycle home to find my father seated at the kitchen table consuming his warm quart of beer. It was not unusual for my parents to arrive home before I did, and this seemed to be just like any other school day. My mother was also in the kitchen, preparing dinner, and I heard them chatting as I walked down the passage towards the kitchen. I heard my mother objecting to my father, saying; "No, he's too young." Before my father could respond, I entered the kitchen, and their conversation was suddenly cut short. The tension in the kitchen was so thick one could cut it with a knife. My father was visibly upset and did not reply. I realised this was not the time to have a conversation, so I greeted them, turned around, and walked to my bedroom, where I closed the door behind me.

As I lay flat on my back on my bed, trying to recover from the exhausting cycle home. I heard my father calling out my name from where he sat in the kitchen. I hated confrontation with my father, and I knew I dared not disobey him, especially when he was drinking. As I walked back into the kitchen, I noticed that he had consumed four quarts of beer. He would place the empty bottles neatly on the floor next to his chair and had half finished his fifth.

"Come, sit down, my boy," he ordered. A thousand reasons went through my mind, and I wondered what trouble I could be in now, but nothing came to mind. I walked over to the kitchen table and sat on my usual chair at the foot of the table opposite my father. He lifted the glass of beer to his mouth and took a huge gulp before speaking.

"My boy, you are old enough now to join the Navy. I have enrolled you, and you start this coming Friday," he said sternly, looking at me over his gold-rimmed glasses. If he had slapped me across the face with his huge hands, it might have come as less of a surprise. I sat staring at him for a few moments, in total disbelief, but also knowing very well not to argue with him.

With a lump in my throat, all I could say was, “But Dad, I’m only twelve. What about my schooling?”

He took another sip of his beer, maybe to disguise his emotions and said, “You will undergo training on weekends and school holidays.” I knew that he had made up his mind, and there was no convincing him otherwise.

That Friday at six o’clock, I had to report to the naval base for training. As my father stopped his Toyota Mark 2 van outside the naval base gate, he looked at me briefly and nodded his head at me. Without a word, I climbed out of the van and walked towards the front entrance gate. Floodlights surrounded the naval base, and I noticed about ten other boys, all about my age, gathered on the parade ground under brightly lit floodlights. As I walked towards them, I heard the sound of a whistle coming from the buildings towards the side of the parade ground.

Out of nowhere appeared a smartly dressed man in his mid-thirties, dressed in white. He stood to attention and shouted; “Attention, gentlemen. Come fall in. I am Petty Officer Killian. I am the base commander, and you will refer to me as sir. Do you understand? Fall into a single file from tallest to shortest and follow me to the base stores.”

I was fortunately one of the tallest, so finding my place in the single file took quite a while. I heard the other boys nervously scampering behind me to find their place. We walked in a single file to the base stores, where a middle-aged, slightly overweight man was waiting for us.

He glanced at the first and tallest boy and handed him one pair of brand new black ankle-length boots, one pair of white garters, two pairs of dark blue long web trousers, one web belt, one thin nylon white belt with a brass buckle, two long sleeve shirts, two short sleeve shirts, a black beret with a silver badge.

We stood quietly in line, nervously wondering what to do next. There was also a little excitement in the air as we received our uniforms.

“Report to the parade ground once you have received your kit.” We heard Warrant Officer Killian shout from behind us. We made our way to the parade ground and stood around nervously, not knowing quite what to do.

"Gentlemen!" the Warrant Officer shouted. "You will undergo basic naval training at this base every weekend from Friday at 18:00 until Sunday at 17:00. The basic training will be extended over a period of eighteen weeks. Once you have received and successfully completed your basic training, you will spend your school holidays at a naval base, where you are required to serve, either in Durban, Simon's Town or Saldanha Bay. Understood?"

"Once you have successfully completed the basic training, and passed all relevant exams, you will be promoted to Seaman and then Able seaman. Right now, you are all just Cadets. Tonight, you can retire to sleeping quarters and get acquainted. Tomorrow, you will report to the parade ground at 05:00. Dismissed."

As we walked into the sleeping quarters, I was amazed at the pristine condition of the highly polished floors. On either side of the rectangular room stood ten steel-framed single beds, each with two blue folded bed sheets, one hard-haired grey blanket and a pillow. A single-door cupboard was situated at the head of the bed. After selecting our bed, we placed our kit on the bed and started to mingle, getting to know each other better.

We came from different backgrounds and attended different schools. Some boys spoke English, whilst some spoke Afrikaans. Some came from good homes, whilst others came from the Salvation Army's Children's home, but one thing we had in common was fear of the unknown and that we were there against our will. I smiled at the boys from the Salvation Army, who were so excited to have just been given their first pair of brand-new shoes, shirts and pants. I realised how fortunate I was and how much I had taken for granted.

The following morning at 04:30, we were woken by the shouting of a young man aged about seventeen years. He was shouting at us and commanded us to get up and report to the parade ground. Half asleep, we stumbled out of bed, dressed in a hurry and ran out of the sleeping quarters to the parade ground. "Fall in, fall in, fall in," this young man shouted as he paced up and down.

Not quite knowing what to do, we milled around on the parade ground, until he could not control his frustrations any longer.

"Just stand next to each other," he shouted. "I am Killick[2] Johnson, and I am your platoon leader," he shouted. "If you need anything, you ask me, not your mother and not your father. Here I am, your mother and your father. Understood?"

We nodded, not knowing quite what he meant. "Form two rows of five and stand at arm's length apart." We shuffled into position and waited for the next command.

Killick Johnson suddenly shouted out whilst we stood to attention, "Platoon. Right turn." We turned to the right, not quite realising that we should all move simultaneously. Also, some boys turned left.

Killick Johnson's patience was obviously wearing thin, and without saying anything, he started to jog ahead of us, signalling that we should follow him.

After what felt like two hours of jogging, we returned to the base. Fortunately, I was relatively fit, so the jog did not affect me that much. Some of the other boys cried, and some vomited, but I realised there was no getting out of this, and I just had to make the best of it.

After breakfast, we were ushered into a room where Petty Officer Killian was waiting for us. This room resembled a classroom and consisted of about twenty desks and chairs. Petty Officer Killian instructed us to choose a desk and to remain at attention behind our chair until he ordered us to be seated. Petty Officer Killian handed out a manual and taught us the different naval ranks and knots. We also learned the names of the different areas on a battleship called a frigate.

Two hours later, we were to report to the parade ground where Killick Johnson would teach us to march, how to stand to attention by clicking our heals together, and how to stand at ease with our hands behind our back with the right hand folded over the left hand with the fingers pointed towards the ground. After the parade drill for two hours, we were instructed to head back towards the lecture room, where Warrant Officer Killian taught

[2] The naval rank of `Killick' refers to a `Leading Seaman' in the Royal and South African Navies. It refers to a small anchor, which was the rank badge. This is the equivalent of an army corporal, and the most common NCO trainer rank in the SADF. An `Able Seaman' is the equivalent of an army lance corporal.

us the Phonetic alphabet. After lunch, we reported back to the parade ground, where Killick Johnson taught us more parade drills and marching. At 15:00, we were released to clean the base. Every square inch of the base had to be polished until 18:00, when it was dinner.

After dinner, we had to retire to our quarters, which we also had to clean. Killick Johnson taught us how to make our beds. How wide should the sheet be folded over the blanket, how the grey blanket should be folded at the corners, and how should the blanket be sprayed with water and brushed. The stripe down the centre should be brushed from top to bottom, and the sides should be brushed from the centre outwards. The bed needed to be exactly square, even if it meant ironing the blanket with Blue Robin starch.

Killick Johnson spent the evening with us in our quarters, teaching us how to make an indentation in the Kiwi boot polish, then spit in the indentation and, in a circular motion, apply the boot polish to our boots. The toe of the boot was then buffed to a brilliant shine using an old stocking. He taught us how to polish our garters with white takkie liquid polish, and the buckle had to be brought to a brilliant shine using Brasso polish. The polish was applied using a finger and rubbed on the buckle until the polish turned black. Leave to dry, and remove the polish using a dry cloth. Our shirts needed three stripes ironed on the back, equally spaced, a matchbox width apart. Robin starch was applied to each crease to hold the crease stiff. Our trousers were also ironed using starch, and the seam in the front had to equal the seam at the back. Each at the same distance from the hem. Our beret badge, which consisted of a lion and anchor, was silver and also brought to a brilliant shine. Before wearing our berets, he instructed us to wet the beret and roll it so it would take the required lop-sided shape.

The nervousness was replaced by excitement as each boy started to prepare his uniform as directed.

At 05:00 hours the following morning, we were awoken by Kellick Johnson, who told us that Petty Officer Killian would be doing an inspection at 06:00 hours. We suddenly jumped into action, and each of us started making our bed as we had been taught. Some managed to get it right sooner than others, but by the time Petty Officer Killian and Killick Johnson arrived for

inspection, we were all ready and standing to attention at the foot of our bed.

"Morning, gentleman," Petty Officer Killian croaked as he walked down the centre of the sleeping quarters, flanked by beds on either side. Some boys gave a half-hearted reply whilst others, clearly not fully awake yet, remained silent. Petty Officer Killian walked slowly, examining each cadet's area and glancing at each of us from top to toe. Once he had arrived at the end of the sleeping quarter, he turned to face us, with his hands firmly behind his back. Killick Johnson stood at his side, waiting for instruction.

Finally, after what felt like five minutes, Petty Officer Killian broke the silence. "Gentleman. I am fully aware that this experience is totally foreign to you, we are at war and our soldiers, whether in the navy, army or air force, should be disciplined at all times. If you are not disciplined and carry out orders efficiently and effectively, you will die. As you know, or might not know, our president has given instruction that gentlemen of your age should start to receive basic military training in one of the corps in preparation for when you will be called to serve your country. We are at war, gentleman, and you need to be prepared. This is not a Boy Scouts club, so I expect you to take everything very seriously." I looked at the boy who stood at his bed opposite mine and noticed tears rolling down his cheeks. No one dared show any signs of emotion or fear, I thought. That's a sign of weakness. Killick Johnson dismissed us once the Petty Officer had exited the quarters and announced that breakfast would be at 07:00 hours.

The boys quickly huddled into small groups and started to discuss what we had just been told. Their terrified eyes looked for any form of comfort or encouragement. Some trembled as they spoke, their bottom lips quivering out of fear. We were going to be trained to be soldiers. We were astonished to hear that the country was at war. We had all seen war movies before, and the thought of fighting a war terrified us. We were just kids!

After breakfast, Killick Johnson summoned us to the parade ground, where we performed drills until lunch. After lunch, Killick Johnson summoned us back to the parade ground, where we found Petty Officer Killian waiting for us, standing to

attention. Once we had taken up our positions on the parade ground, Killick Johnson brought us to attention.

Petty Officer Killian addressed us. “Gentleman. I have decided that you can all go home and that this base will be closed until next weekend. Gentlemen, get good rest this week. As of next week, we will start intensive training. Company dismissed.”

There was sudden cheer and relief among the boys, but each wondered what to expect. When we exited the base, I found my father waiting for me in his Mark 2 van. I opened the door, and as I climbed in, I noticed a faint smile on my father’s face. I felt, for a moment, that I had made him proud. My father and I did not have much in common, and we did not spend much time together, but I felt good that I had pleased him. He started his van without saying a word, and we drove home in silence.

On the way home, I thought about what I would tell my friends at school. I was also excited to hear from them which military base they were assigned to, and what they were taught. I was so disappointed and troubled when I found out the following morning that out of all the boys in my school, I was the only boy to be called for military duty. I wondered if this was a real war or if it was just my father wanting to send me to war to get rid of me.

One day, when my mother and I were alone, I asked her why I had to sacrifice my weekends and school holidays with my friends or play rugby for a stupid war I did not even understand or care about. She caringly took me to the Wimpy for a `Farmhouse breakfast and milkshake.’

There, she explained to me that my father, who was the oldest of three children, ran away from home at the age of sixteen and joined the Navy in the Second World War. She explained that his father worked long hours on the railway and would get home late at night. Tired and hungry from a long, hard day’s work, he had to listen to his wife complain about all the kids who had done wrong that day. She had a little black book in which she recorded each of the kids’ transgressions for the day. Before being given his dinner and allowed a bath, he would need to wake each of the kids and beat them accordingly or until she was satisfied the appropriate punishment had been given. He endured this punishment, unfounded as it was, until he was old enough to run away and join the Navy. I only realised then what

a miserable upbringing my father had, but I did not understand why I had to join the Navy. My ambition at the age of twelve was definitely not to become a soldier.

I realised that I could not convince my father otherwise, so I thought I would just have to make the best of it. Maybe being in the Navy might not be such a bad idea. At least, if I survived, I would see the world. At night, after my homework, I would polish my boots and get my uniform ready for the upcoming weekend.

The following Friday, my father took me to the naval base. I arrived smartly dressed, and every part of my uniform that could shine did. As I walked into the base, I noticed about ten new recruits milling around on the parade ground, each with their own nervousness engraved on their faces.

At exactly 18:00, Petty Officer Killian called us to the parade ground. Killick Johnson ushered the new arrivals away whilst Petty Officer Killian instructed us to reassemble in the lecture room. We stood to attention, each at his own desk, until Petty Officer Killian entered and ordered us to be seated. The lectures became more intense, and the volume of training manuals increased. By the time we were dismissed, signs of strain were visible on everyone's face.

The following day, drill practice was intensified, and Killick Johnson also introduced physical training. By the end of that weekend, all enthusiasm was gone, and I was no longer sure that these war games were for me. I did not want to disappoint my father, so I realised that this would probably be my life and my future as a soldier.

Again, we were summoned to the base stores, and we wondered what other uniform would be issued to us now, but instead, each cadet from my intake received an R1 rifle and cleaning kit wrapped in a canvas holder. When I walked out of the store carrying my rifle, other cadets who were waiting their turn chatted excitedly amongst themselves. I heard Killick Johnson shout from the parade ground, instructing us to "fall in" once we received our firearm. I made my way to the parade ground, waiting for the other cadets.

Once we had all gathered in formation, Killick Johnson instructed us to bring the rifle above our head, and we had to run around the parade ground singing, "This is my firearm, and this is my gun. This is for fighting, and this is for fun." We were made to

run around the parade ground until some of the less fit or smaller guys started to vomit, but still we continued to run. Some guys burst into tears at the strenuous exercise, stumbling forward as they ran and not being able to carry their firearms above their heads. After what seemed like two hours of running, we were brought to a halt. Killick Johnson stood with his hands on his hips for a while, trying to compose himself.

We were brought to attention, and Killick Johnson taught us how to manage our firearm during the parade drill. We marched and ran with our firearms across our chests until, at about 22:00, we were instructed to hand our firearms back to the stores for safekeeping.

That evening, in our quarters, all the guys could talk about was their rifles. The icy cold feeling of the steel barrel and hard plastic covers excited them. Eventually, the guys piped down and fell asleep, being quite excited about the firearm and what lay ahead the next day.

The following day, we were taught how to disassemble and reassemble the rifle, what the various working parts are called, and how it works. Killick Johnson also taught us how to clean and oil the firearm. After a few more weeks, and when we were comfortable with the firearm, we were taken to the shooting range for shooting practice.

At the shooting range, members of the defence force were present to oversee the exercise. We were instructed to “fall in“ and given instructions relating to shooting range drills. We were handed twenty rounds of live ammunition and shown how to load the magazine. Eventually, the time came to shoot this rifle. We lay on the ground with our firearms pointed towards the target, which was positioned about one hundred meters away. We inhaled and exhaled slowly and calmly as instructed. Members from the defence force stood behind us, and the range commander bellowed; ”Platoon, load.”

We tilted our rifle slightly to the side and inserted the magazine. As much as I tried to control my emotions, I felt my heart pound in my chest, and I felt beads of sweat run down my forehead and into my eyes. My hands started to shake at the weight of the firearm, and I knew that now was not the time to wipe the sweat.

Our range commander promised, when he addressed us, that if we "fuck up," he would kick our arses with his size twelve boots until our noses bled; something we dreaded. When he was satisfied that all cadets had loaded their rifles and placed them back on the ground in front of them, he bellowed out the next command.

"Ready" we lifted the rifle into our shoulder and cocked the weapon. I realised that the moment I was dreading was about to happen. I did not know how much recoil the firearm had or how loud the firearm would be. I gritted my teeth, knowing I had no option but to follow instructions. Beads of sweat now also ran down my neck onto my back. I was sure the other cadets were as terrified as I was, but we were men now and would soon be fighting a war.

"Fire!" I held the firearm butt tightly into my shoulder and controlled my breathing as best I could. I was about to squeeze the trigger when suddenly, the cadet to my left let off a shot. The sudden and unexpected sound startled me, and my eardrums rang out in pain. His spent cartridge was ejected to the right and hit me on my left forearm before continuing on its trajectory. The sudden burn on my forearm felt like a cigarette had just been extinguished on my arm. I was not having fun. I would rather be at home playing with my Action Man. I closed my eyes and squeezed the trigger. Suddenly, my rifle recoiled with a loud bang as I discharged a round, not sure how close to the target I was. I still had nineteen rounds in the magazine.

The sun was beating down on my back, and I was not enjoying the exercise. I decided to let off all nineteen rounds to get this punishment over with. I didn't care if I hit the target or not. When eventually it became quiet, the range commander shouted out, "Unload" I picked up my firearm that had been placed on the ground in front of me and removed the magazine, cocked the weapon, examined the chamber and cocked it again to ensure that it was completely safe.

We then stood at ease behind our rifles. The range commander and other defence force members walked to our targets, where they placed a small round coloured sticker on top of the bullet holes before making their way back to where we stood. "Cadets from right to left report to Lieutenant Van Wyk

for ammunition." My heart sank when I realised that we had to repeat the exercise.

A week or two later, we were taken to a dam, which was not quite as large as Midmar Dam, [Henley Dam] but nevertheless, it was a large dam. On our arrival, we were instructed to "fall in" in platoon formation, where Killick Johnson made us run to the dam wall and back. Puffs of vapour came from our mouths as we exhaled in the cold winter air.

Once we caught our breath, Killick Johnson ran with us to a boat house. He opened the door, which housed a 32ft wailer. This is a rowing boat that seats twelve crew that rowed[3] and a commander who stood at the back shouting orders and steering the boat. Once the boat was in the water, we assumed our positions and started to row the boat. To row the boat in unison was a task on its own. Also, the weight and length of the boat came with its own challenges. Killick Johnson made us row around this large dam until we got it right, and when we got it right, we had to row around a few more times.

By lunch, the strenuous rowing became a pleasure, and we skipped along the water at speed with the icy cold air rushing past us. For lunch, we were given a one-meal ration pack consisting of a packet of mix-on juice with a plastic bag to shake the mix into, a tin of food, a packet of "dog" biscuits, a small cheese and a roll of energy sweets. Killick Johnson told us that this was a standard issue meal for when we go to war in the bush.

A while later, we reported to the stores and were issued battle gear. As young boys, we dressed in army "browns" with all the webbing, consisting of a satchel, a yolk, a belt, a water bottle and a hard hat. Armed with our rifles, we went on a night walk. After walking for about two hours, we turned off the road and marched in single file into the bush, our firearms across our bodies - ready for action. We walked through the bush and headed up a steep hill, where eventually, we were halted by Killick Johnson, using hand signals. Most of the boys were exhausted from the long walk and from carrying oversized gear. Killick Johnson taught us about flares and the meaning of the

[3] The required term in naval cadets was `pulled / pulling'. Stop sniggering!

different coloured flares. He then fired a few flares into the air, which was exciting for us to watch. It became time to sleep. Killick Johnson instructed that we should sleep fully dressed with all our gear on. He taught us to sleep in a straight line on our backs. Each cadet would lie between the legs of the cadet next to him, and the cadet on his other side would lie between his legs. Our firearms lying across our chest, ready for action. Being interlinked like this would keep us together and warm. Before sunrise, we walked, in the icy cold winter air, back to our base, where we had breakfast.

After about my third month of training, Petty Officer Killian called me to his office. I stood to attention at the open door and knocked on the door gently. I noticed he was seated behind his desk, with different coloured files stacked on his desk in front of him. He glanced up briefly before waving at me to come in.

"Take a seat," he said, looking at me over his black-rimmed glasses. I obeyed and gently pulled a chair away from his desk and sat down. "I have been instructed to send one cadet from this base to Saldanha for training during the July holidays. A total of twenty cadets, countrywide, will receive further training at Saldanha Naval Base for a period of three weeks, and you have been nominated to attend this training. I thought that I would bring this to your attention before contacting your father. I am confident you will make me and this base proud, son."

For the first time, I saw a softer side to Petty Officer Killian and realised then that he did actually care about his cadets. I could hardly believe my ears and was sure that my excitement was noticeable. I found myself beaming from ear to ear, even though this appeared to be an instruction and not a request. "Good then. You are dismissed. And by the way, if you successfully complete this course, you will be promoted to Seaman," he said, trying to keep his look official, but it was clear that he shared the same excitement with me.

I attended training sessions every weekend and was soon promoted to group leader. I grew more excited as every week passed, until it was finally time to board the train to Cape Town. My mother stood on the railway platform, trying to contain her tears, whilst my father had his arm around her. She briefly removed her hands from her mouth and waved at me as the train

left the railway station, the thick black smoke from the locomotive soon filling the air.

On my arrival in Cape Town three days later, I climbed off the train and onto the platform. Not quite sure what to expect or who I should meet, I walked around aimlessly for a while, admiring the beauty of Table Mountain and the surrounding buildings, when I was suddenly approached by a coloured man in his mid-thirties. He was dressed in naval uniform, and I realised that he had come to collect me. “Cadet!” is all he said as he approached me. It did cross my mind that I should correct him. I was an able seaman. My common sense got the better of me, and I decided to keep quiet.

We walked out of the railway station together and soon came to a naval minibus parked in the official parking area. The bus was painted grey with a dark blue horizontal stripe around it. When I opened the sliding door, I noticed nineteen boys, all about my age, seated on the bus. Each boy sat quietly in their own thoughts, and I greeted them and climbed in. There was no response from any of these boys. It soon became apparent that all of them were Afrikaans. Best I just keep to myself, I thought. I thought briefly of when we played rugby and the rivalry between English and Afrikaans-speaking boys. I was also clearly outnumbered.

I had never been to the Cape before, and I was astonished by the beauty of the wine lands, the landscape and the sea. After what felt like an hour and a half drive, we finally arrived at Saldanha Naval Base. As the minibus approached the main entrance, I noticed a heavily guarded boom gate with a guard house centred between the entrance and exit. A smartly dressed Able Seaman, carrying an R1 rifle, approached the minibus as it came to a standstill at the stop sign. He greeted the driver in Afrikaans and peered into the minibus, where he glanced at the twenty terrified young faces inside. The Able Seaman opened the heavily wired gate and boom and allowed the driver in. As the minibus meandered up a steep hill, I noticed a large mast overlooking the ocean below. This mast was used to hang flags at least fifty meters into the air. In the centre hung the South African, orange, white and blue striped flag. On the horizontal mast, to the right, hung the South African navy flag; white and green and on the same horizontal mast, on the left, hung the

naval base flag and another indicating the highest rank held at that base. I noticed a platoon of about fifteen, much older boys, probably school leavers, running in formation. When the minibus finally came to a standstill near the administration block, the driver switched off the engine and came around to open the minibus for us. Before the door was completely open, he started to shout instructions, all in Afrikaans. I realised very quickly that we were not permitted to walk anywhere on the base. Everywhere we went had to be at least a jog. The driver jogged with us to the far end of the base and, upon entering the building, told us that this would be our sleeping quarters for the duration of our stay. As we entered the sleeping quarters, I realised that it resembled the sleeping quarters at my home base. My fellow trainees slotted into this environment well, and soon we had each selected a bed. While we were still unpacking our belongings into the small single-door cupboard behind the bed, we suddenly heard, "*Aandag!*" Where we were, we immediately jumped to attention by clicking our heels together. In walked a coloured killick in his mid-twenties. "*Tree aan*!" was all he shouted before turning around and started running towards the parade ground. We dropped whatever we were doing and ran after him. After about a three-hundred-meter run, we arrived at the parade ground, where we quickly fell in formation an arm's length apart. I soon realised that all instructions were in Afrikaans, and if I didn't fully understand, I just had to pretend I did. I hoped that I would not be asked any questions, as my reply in broken Afrikaans would be a joke. The killick blasted out instructions about the do's and don'ts and told us where the lecture area and mess were. He told us that we had to be properly dressed in the right attire for meals and gave us the times for meals, provided we were at the base at those times. Guard duties had been allocated with a list of who was on duty, as well as times and functions. This list was pinned to the notice board in our bungalow. He would conduct daily inspections of our uniforms, sleeping quarters and beards. I didn't realise boys at the age of twelve were shaving, and I certainly wasn't.

The killick brought us to attention, and with a swift command, we turned to the right. On his next command, I felt myself running in formation, my fists clenched on my chest. We ran around the naval base, where he pointed out the guard posts

at every corner of the base. On the longest, which was also the sea-facing side, a guard post was situated in the middle, totalling three guard posts on that side. Cannons were positioned behind stone walls at about fifty-meter intervals, overlooking the sea. We continued to run past the admin block, the mess, the stores and the lecture block. After a two-hour run, at a brisk pace, we had familiarised ourselves with the base. Back at the parade ground, the killick retired us and instructed us to shower and dress for dinner at 18:00, where the base commander, Vice Admiral Van Niekerk, would address us.

At exactly 18:00, the whistle of a bosun whistle sounded as an indication that we should report to the parade ground for dinner. Dressed in clean clothes and polished boots, we ran to the parade ground and fell in formation in our platoon. I was surprised when at least one hundred and fifty other trainees came running towards the parade ground. I glanced to my left, as a platoon was formed and was surprised at their efficiency, neatness and accuracy on the parade ground. These were servicemen. Young men who had completed their schooling and were undergoing their mandatory military service. Each platoon leader called their platoon to attention, and suddenly, with one click of the heels, everyone came to attention. The bosun whistle sounded again, and the servicemen raised their rifles in front of them, standing with their right foot behind their left foot and angled towards the right. Vice Admiral Van Niekerk made his appearance. I looked directly ahead but noticed a tall, slender, snow-white bearded man dressed in a white tunic with all his medals standing on the podium in front of us. Once the Vice Admiral had positioned himself behind the microphone, the bosun whistle sounded again, and everyone present took up the ease position. We were not armed, so we placed our outstretched hands behind our backs with our right hand on top of our left with our fingers pointed towards the ground. The servicemen placed their firearms on their right side, holding the barrel of the firearm with an outstretched arm, and left arm behind their back with palms exposed and fingers pointed towards the ground. “Gentlemen,” he said, speaking into the microphone. “I would like to welcome and congratulate our new cadets. Welcome you to this, the largest naval training base in the country, and congratulate you for being nominated to join us

here. You are the next generation of naval men, and I trust that you will not only learn skills about naval warfare, but you will also enjoy your time here with us. Once you have successfully completed your training here, you will automatically qualify for national service in the Navy. Some of you will, in the future, be trained on a frigate where your services might be required."

"Gentleman. Let me remind you that we are at war against those who will do anything in their power to overthrow this government, and we will stop at nothing to overcome the forces of evil that will come against us."

The bosun whistle sounded again, and everyone came to attention. The Vice Admiral saluted in reply, holding his stare over the parade ground for a few moments before turning around and exiting the parade ground. The bosun whistle sounded again, and each platoon leader dismissed his platoon.

We ran towards the mess where we lined up for dinner. In a single file, we were handed a white porcelain plate, a silver knife and fork and a glass. In an orderly, quiet fashion, we walked past the coloured stewards who served each with rice, potato, a variety of vegetables, thinly sliced roast beef and gravy. A variety of fresh fruit juice was kept in containers at the end of the serving area. It soon became apparent that we did not share the same eating area as the serviceman, but we made our way to the pristine white tablecloths that covered the tables meant for us.

After a delicious dinner, I was surprised when the kitchen staff removed our plates. The guys in my platoon rose from the table and neatly placed their chairs under the table where they had found it. We assembled and ran in formation back to our barracks.

The guys scrambled to the notice board, a sense of excitement in the air, knowing that we would be commencing with guard duties soon. This was a new and exciting experience as none of us had performed guard duties before, and we looked forward to maybe being armed.

On the notice board was a printout of the layout of the base, indicating the guard posts, each with a letter of the alphabet as a reference, the admin block, the stores, the lecture area, rifle range, front and main entrance, five barracks and drill area, each with its own letter of the alphabet as reference. Adjacent to this layout was a list of names with times and area

references for guard duties. Also on the board was a list of instructions. The first instruction was that persons had to report for guard duty at least thirty minutes before the shift commenced. Persons had to report to the duty room, where they would be officially booked on duty by the killick in charge of the shift. Dress was described as “field dress.” Also on the list of instructions were meal times, study time and time for lights out, which was at 22:00 hours. I was quite horrified when I realised our day starts at 04:00 hours with inspection. I ran my finger down the list of names in search of my name and established that I was on duty from midnight until 03:00 hours, on “Greenway 4,” which meant I had to patrol, on foot, the perimeter fence between guardhouse three and guardhouse four at that time. Guard duties commenced at 21:00 and were performed in three hourly shifts until 03:00 hours—five of us were divided into different areas and key points per shift. I wondered, if lights out was at 22:00 hours, we had to report for duty thirty minutes before shift at midnight, work until 03:00 and stand inspection at 04:00 hours, when I would get time to rest. On closer inspection of the duty list, I established that I wouldn’t work again for the next two nights, which came as a huge relief.

When I arrived at my bed with neatly folded linen at the foot of the bed and to unpack my belongings, I glanced at the bed to the right of mine and noticed a timid pale-looking boy trying to make sense of all that we had experienced thus far. He was reserved and did not talk to the other boys as we had. I sat on my bed, looked at him, and decided to make conversation. I asked him his name and, without looking at me, replied bluntly, “Koenraad,” but remained focused on unpacking his belongings. He did not look up as he spoke. I asked him how old he was and was surprised to hear that he was eleven and his birthday was only in six months’ time, making him the youngest boy in the platoon. I immediately sympathised with him and realised how traumatic this experience must be for him. I introduced myself and sensed immediately that he felt comfortable with me. After long intervals in our conversation, I learned that he was from the Bram Fischer children’s home in Pretoria. He confided in me. He told me that he did not have parents and that all the boys from the children’s home were called to do military service, but he was the only boy from that children’s home to be sent to the navy,

and that he missed his friends very much and wondered whether he would see them again. I felt a lump form in my throat as I listened to the boy. He spoke without looking at me and continued to focus on unpacking his few belongings. Trying to console the boy, I told him that we were his new friends and that he needn't be afraid, but the visibly upset boy didn't take much notice of me.

That evening at 23:30, I, together with four other boys, reported for guard duties. The killick on duty was young, and I thought this was his first year out of school. We stood to attention in the duty office while he inspected our dress and recorded our names in a register. He walked briskly over to a cupboard against the wall and removed five batons, which he handed to us. Before dismissing us, he gave us instructions that if we were caught sleeping on duty, the punishment would be severe. We were dismissed from this warm duty room and walked out into the cold night air.

I felt the icy wind against my cheeks as I ran towards the area which I had to guard. By the time I had completed the ten-minute run, my lungs burned from the cold, and I felt my lips start to crack. I relieved that guard on duty and watched enviously as he disappeared into the distance to the warmth of the barracks. I undertook the walk, remaining vigilant with my baton placed firmly in my right hand. The South Easterly wind off the Atlantic was icy, and I estimated that it blew at about fifty knots. After about forty-five minutes I arrived at guardhouse three. I looked briefly but intensely out to sea and strained my eyes against the darkness of the ice-cold water. I did not notice any suspicious activity, so I undertook the forty-five-minute walk back to guardhouse four. After what felt like an eternity, my shift was finally over. At two-thirty, I gathered up enough strength to run back to the duty room, where the other cadets and the on-duty killick met me. I handed my baton back and was tempted to force my hands in my pockets for warmth, but I resisted the temptation, realising it would be unethical. After another inspection, we were dismissed.

At exactly 04:00 hours, our platoon leader entered our barracks. He was in possession of a steel pipe, which he used to hit the steel frame beds as he walked. "Attention," he shouted, hoping to find us still asleep, but we were ready and waiting for

him. Everyone jumped to attention and stood at the foot of their beds, and stared directly ahead. He examined each bed, which was perfectly made and to the required high standard. As he approached us, he would pause for a moment and look us up and down, hoping to find fault, but he couldn't. He seemed rather agitated for getting up at this unearthly hour, only to find everything in order. He walked to the far end of the barrack and made a brisk around turn. He stood to attention, perfectly erect with his chest and bottom jaw slightly protruding and with a loud growl, shouted, "*Tree-aan*." (Fall in)

Within minutes, we were in formation on the parade ground. Our platoon leader brought us to attention and turned us to the left. The icy wind was pounding against my cheeks as we undertook our jog from the parade ground, passed the duty office and admin block, and soon, I felt myself running down the road towards the main entrance. We ran out through the main entrance and along a road which separated the beach from the base. By this time, I could hear most of the cadets gasping for air as we ran, and their panting became heavier. We ran, with our fists clenched on our chests, for about three hundred meters, when we heard our platoon leader command us to turn left. The three cadets that led the way turned immediately left and onto the beach. I immediately felt the difficulty in running on soft beach sand wearing boots. As we reached the water's edge, our platoon leader commanded another left turn, and we obliged. With each cadet in his own thoughts and trying to manage their own personal challenges, we continued on our run along the beach.

Whilst trying desperately not to show my own emotions, I heard Koenraad, who was near the back, start to cry as we ran. This exercise was proving to be too strenuous for him. It was not long, and a few other cadets started to cry. The physical exhaustion and mental strain were getting to them. I heard the cadet to my right start to pant heavily under the physical strain, but none of us wanted to exhibit our weakness. We were in the military now, and we needed to be tough. I heard Koenraad and two other cadets fall to the ground in total exhaustion. One boy was vomiting, another burst into tears, and another collapsed face-first into the sand, gasping for air. Our platoon leader commanded us to "*makeer die pas*," and we ran on the spot

whilst he went over to the fallen boys. I thought that he might show compassion and sympathy towards these boys, but instead, he bent over them and started to shout insults, even something about their mothers. This made the situation worse, and the boys' cries became louder. He insulted them further and commanded them to get up and rejoin the platoon. Slowly and reluctantly, the boys rose to their feet, sniffing and using the back of their hands to wipe their noses. They eventually re-joined the platoon, and we continued our run. When we arrived at the jetty, he turned us to the left, back onto the tarred road, and we ran back to the base. At the parade ground, he commanded us to halt, which we did. The platoon leader came to attention and addressed the platoon. He, in no uncertain terms, told us that we had better pull ourselves together and that this "sissy" behaviour needs to end right now. He dismissed us and told us to dress for breakfast. Quite relieved that this punishment was finally over, we ran to our barracks. When we arrived at the barracks, we made our way to tour beds and collapsed on the neatly folded and ironed linen. Koenraad lay flat on his back and covered his face with his arm, elbow pointed upwards, and cried uncontrollably. Others lay still, panting from the strenuous exercise, whilst others just lay quietly staring at the ceiling.

After breakfast, our platoon leader instructed us to gather in front of the admin block. Not knowing what to expect, we ran to the admin block and took up our positions in platoon formation. Our platoon leader brought us to attention and, one by one, called out our names. As our names were called, we were ushered into the stores, where the storeman handed us each an R1 semi-automatic rifle and magazine. None of us had handled a firearm before, and its sheer weight came as a surprise. As we received our firearm, we exited the building and lined up outside in formation again. There was a sense of excitement as we were now in possession of a real firearm. The less privileged boys who did not receive gifts often were the most excited. Our leader brought an end to the chatter and excitement and brought us swiftly to attention. He demonstrated how we should `stand at ease', and how we should `stand to attention' with the firearm. He also showed us how to run, with the firearm across our chest. After repeating the drill a few times, he brought us to attention and ran us to the lecture room, where we were taught the names

of the different parts of the firearm, including the working mechanism, which caused the firearm to operate. For the duration of the morning, we had to learn how to disassemble and reassemble the firearm until we could do it without any assistance. After lunch, we were instructed to assemble on the parade ground where our platoon leader brought us to attention and marched us to the shooting range. This was so exciting as we had never fired a real firearm before. At the range, we were instructed to fall into a single file and were each handed twenty rounds of live ammunition. Our platoon leader kept a close watch over us as we loaded the ammunition into the magazine. He then explained the drill to us concerning the use of the firearm and threatened that if any of us disobeyed an order or in any possible way endangered the life of another person, we would be sent to the detention barracks immediately, where we would remain for the duration of the course. We had heard about the detention barracks and discussed it amongst ourselves. The picture we had created of the place might not be that far from the truth, and everyone dreaded being sent there. Once our platoon leader had explained to us that we would fire twenty rounds, in rapid fire, at the target and once we had completed the shooting, we should lie the firearm down in front of us with the breach open and facing upwards. He explained how to aim and how to hold the firearm tightly into the shoulder to prevent the effects of the recoil. We lay on the shooting mat provided and awaited his instruction to cock the firearm, which would place the first bullet in the breach block. Adrenalin pumped through my veins with excitement and I could feel my heart pounding against my chest as I lay awaiting his instruction.

Then suddenly, from behind me, I heard him shout, “Load!” My hands trembled slightly as I pulled back the breach, which forced the bullet out of the magazine. We lay there nervously awaiting his next instruction. Then suddenly, he shouted, “Aim!” With nervous excitement, I lifted the firearm and aimed it at the target. This firearm was more than half my body length, and I was surprised at its weight resting on one arm. I had no idea of the recoil or how much noise it made, but I knew the next command would be fire, and I would find out. Then suddenly, and without warning, I heard the platoon leader shout, “Fire.“ I kept my aim on the target, which was a silhouette of a

man with a firearm across his chest, at a distance of fifty meters away. As I bit my lip and wanted to squeeze the trigger, a shot rang out. The deafening sound came from the guy who lay next to me. This startled me and my hands started to quiver, but I knew I had to pull the trigger. I took aim again, and squeezed the trigger gently until the shot rang out. The recoil was harder than I had anticipated, and I knew that I would have to adjust my grip if I wanted to fire another nineteen rounds. Within a second, gunfire sounded around me. By my fifth round, my ears hurt, and my eyes burned as sweat ran from my brow. I wanted this to end, so without aiming properly, I fired all the remaining rounds in the direction of the target. As soon as this defining noise started, it ended. There was silence.

I lay on my mat uncomfortably, with my firearm on the ground in front of me and awaited the next instruction. "Platoon, make safe your firearm," was our next instruction once it had been quiet for some time. I raised my firearm with my left hand and removed the magazine. I cocked the firearm twice and looked into the breach to make sure no bullet was still lodged inside. Our platoon leader walked past each of us, from behind and checked the safety of each firearm for himself. When he was satisfied all firearms were safe, he called us to attention. We jumped to attention, holding the firearm at our right-hand side. As I clutched the barrel, I felt the skin scorch from the heat. My immediate reaction was to let go, but I knew this could have devastating consequences. With sweat still pouring into my eyes, I remained focused ahead and awaited our next instruction. Our platoon leader dismissed us and ran with us to our barracks, where he handed each cadet a cleaning kit and instructed us to clean our firearms.

As the days went by, we became stronger and more disciplined, and soon, drill, physical education, "*op voks*," lectures, and guard duties became a way of life. Each of us did what we had to stay out of trouble.

Early one Saturday evening, we were in our bungalow chatting and joking when we heard the familiar sound of our platoon leader shout, "Attention," as he walked into the bungalow. We automatically jumped to attention and stared straight ahead, as we had done so many times before. He staggered into our bungalow, throwing insults at us, and I knew

immediately that he was drunk. As he approached us, he placed his face so close to ours that when he shouted insults, I could smell the strong liquor on his breath. He walked up to each of us and told us that we were never going to be good seamen and that we were the most useless bunch he had ever trained. Not one of us flinched at his insults, and we kept our stares directly in front of us.

Once he had insulted each of us individually, he commanded us to drop our shorts and underpants. Some of us looked bewildered at his request but knew that we would carry out his each and every instruction without hesitation, so we pulled down our shorts and underpants and wondered what the next instruction would be. Whilst we were back in the attention position, he instructed us to put out our right hand. He walked past each of us and squeezed a length of Deep Heat into each hand. He instructed the boys who were not circumcised to pull back their foreskin, and we had to rub this Deep Heat on our penises. He walked up and down, checking that no one was cheating, and I noticed a smile come to his face as some of the boys had tears rolling down their cheeks. Nobody flinched as we rubbed the Deep Heat on our penises, although the burning sensation was unbearable. When he realised he was not getting any pleasure from our pain, he instructed us to rub the Deep Heat on our testicles. He wanted a reaction, and we were not going to give him the satisfaction, so we rubbed the Deep heat on our testicles and dick head but kept our gaze straight ahead of us. After about five minutes of absolute agony, he realised how tough we had become and that this brought him no pleasure. As he walked out of our barracks, he shouted over his shoulder, “Shower.” We ran to the showers, and we all managed to get under the cool water. The relief that the torture was over and the relief the water brought also helped release emotions. Most guys burst into tears in disbelief, and for the first time during our training, it was okay to cry.

We did not see our platoon leader for a few days, and many of us wondered if he was ill or maybe even court marshalled for what he had put us through. None of us had spoken out about our ordeal, so we wondered how anybody could have found out. At 04:00 the following morning, we heard the all too familiar voice of our platoon leader as he entered our

barracks for inspection. Something about him had changed. He seemed less strict, used less vulgar language and seemed almost to be covered in a sense of shame. He quickly and briefly performed his inspection as if he was obliged to do so and dismissed us to the parade ground, where we stood in platoon formation, ready for our usual early morning physical exercise. He brought us to attention and ran with us out of the main entrance, not nearly at the same fast pace as before. Once we arrived on the road in front of the base, we turned right and jogged to the jetty. The morning air was still cold, but our lungs didn't burn like before.

He pointed out a 32ft whaler, which was tied to the jetty, and instructed us to get in. Once we were seated, we were instructed to pull the life jacket from under the seat, and following his instructions, we tied the life jacket to our abdomen. He took his place at the back of the massive rowing boat and managed the rudder. With an almighty heave, the boat moved from the jetty, and we headed out to sea. We rowed in unison for about thirty minutes until we heard his command for us to stop rowing. He told us that when the boat is not being rowed, we should lift the oar out of the water and turn the paddle horizontal to the water, with outstretched arms in front of us.

The boat eventually came to a standstill with the icy Atlantic waters lapping against the sides. Our platoon leader rose from his seat and demonstrated how, on his command, only guys on the starboard side would sit on the edge of the boat and fall backwards into the water. They would remain in the water until he commanded guys seated on the port side to assist in pulling them out. This exercise would be repeated with guys on the port side flipping backwards into to water.

The water was icy cold and took my breath away. As my body came into contact with the icy water, I could feel every muscle in my body tense up, which made swimming and staying afloat quite a challenge. Once we had reassembled on the boat, the icy wind, against our wet skin, forced our teeth together in clatter, and we shivered uncontrollably. He commanded us to take hold of our oars with our frozen little hands and instructed us to row forward. He managed the rudder, and after what felt like forever, we finally arrived back at the jetty. The whaler was moored, and with teeth still clattering from the cold, we came

into platoon formation and started to jog back to the base. When we finally arrived back at our bungalow, it became a scramble for the showers to find warmth.

The lectures became more intense as we were taught the different areas of a naval frigate. We also learned basic navigational skills, radio procedures, and the meaning of the different whistles of the Bosun whistle. We were also permitted to raise the flags high up on the mast during morning parades. Two cadets raised one flag, and all three flags were raised simultaneously, while one cadet sounded the Bosun whistle.

Three weeks of training went by so quickly, and we now spent most of our time on the parade ground, doing drill practice in preparation for our final parade.

The time was upon us to bid this place farewell and excitement was mounting that we would all soon be back in the comfort of our homes. We drilled smartly on the parade ground as if we had been doing it for years. The only differentiation between us and the other platoons was our age. The base Vice Admiral addressed us and complimented us on successfully completing the course. In closing, he encouraged us to join the Navy on a permanent basis and reiterated that we were at war and our country needed us.

Due to my rugby skills and leadership qualities, not because of my academic achievements, I was enrolled in a private and very exclusive, boys' only high school. [Matirzburg College] I knew my parents could not afford it, but my mother insisted that I get a good education.

During my first year in high school, I went on several hikes with friends organised by a student called Barry, who was dating the older sister of my fellow cadet and classmate, Robin. I was invited on an excursion in the Hella Hella Gorge.

I mentioned to a friend at school that we intended to hike in the Hella-Hella Gorge, and he told me that he knew that area well. He had family who managed a well-known holiday resort in the area. He described the area as remote but also beautiful, with a river running through the gorge flanked by hills covered in plantations.

We walked until we reached the top of a cliff where water trickled down the rock face into a small pool covered in boulders, about twenty-five meters below. [22/8/1982] I stood at the edge of the waterfall admiring the view, then I slipped …

Eight days later, I forced my left eye open. I vaguely saw my mother seated in a chair next to me. She looked haggard and had aged dramatically since I last saw her. Grey hair started to show through her dark curls, and her cheeks were sunken. Puffy eyes were sunken into their sockets from the lack of sleep and worry. The lack of sleep had taken its toll. Her bagged eyes suddenly came to light when she saw my eyelid move, and a crooked smile came to her face as she fought back the tears. I realised that my right eye was swollen shut. I tried to speak, but a pipe in my mouth and nose made that impossible. The right side of my face was swollen, but with my tongue, I felt I had teeth that were unfamiliar to my upper jaw, which was wired shut. I so badly wanted to touch her, just hold her hand for a while, console her and tell her that all would be okay, but I couldn't move my arms.

As I lay on my back, I slowly came to my senses and realised I couldn't feel my left leg. My head ached, but managed to say, out of the corner of my mouth, "Mom, I'm hungry." She couldn't contain her emotions any longer and she burst into tears, covering her face with both hands. Within moments, a nurse rushed to my side. She checked my blood pressure and temperature on the monitors. I glanced at her and noticed her hand on my mom's shoulder. Her head slightly cocked to the side, and a slight smile appeared on her face. Without saying a word she turned and left us to be alone.

My mother moved her chair closer to the side of the bed and touched my arm gently. I could tell she was lost for words as she sat and gazed into my face. Finally, she broke the silence and said, "Your friends have been here every day after school to visit you." She soon realised I was not in any state to make conversation, so she pushed her chair back and stood up and left the ward. As I lay on my back, I could hear medical monitors beeping around me, and I realised I was not alone. Nurses scurried in and out, always looking very busy. My mother returned with a strawberry Yogi sip and a plastic feeder. She took

up her place next to my bed and tried to feed me the Yogi sip. After a few teaspoons of Yogi sip, I fell asleep again.

When I woke the following morning, I again found my mother at my bedside. She looked so much better. She had freshened up, brushed her hair, put on a little makeup, and worn fresh clothes. The strain on her face had completely disappeared.

That morning, I met Dr Davidson for the first time. A middle-aged, energetic and rather good-looking surgeon walked into the ICU and beamed from ear to ear when he saw me. "Hello, young man," he said as he came to the side of my bed. "We were worried about you. How are you feeling?" I wasn't quite sure how I should respond, so I thought it would be better to keep quiet. He removed a small torch from his coat pocket and shone the light into my left eye after lifting my eyebrow with his thumb. He stood up and asked if I could hear him, and I indicated that I could. "Son, you've been in a coma for eight days, and I'm so happy you've decided to join us. You've experienced a traumatic accident, and you will need a lot of rest to recover. He checked a clipboard at the end of my bed, signed it and, with a smile, nodded to my mother as an indication that he would leave us alone.

That afternoon, my friends from school came to visit me. They were delighted that I was finally awake and chattered a while before my mother realised I was exhausted and asked them to leave. A day or so later, my school principal popped in for a quick visit. He did not stay long, and when he left, my mother followed him out of the ward and stayed away awhile, obviously getting him up to speed regarding my condition. My father came to see me during the evening visiting hours. He appeared pleased with my slow but steady recovery. Every day, I was seen by specialists who kept my mother abreast of my recovery and their concerns.

After a few days, when I was fully conscious, my mother told me that I had slipped and fallen down a waterfall. In a critical condition and bleeding profusely, my friends had removed me from the water, and one friend had run to the nearby holiday resort in search of help. A medical helicopter[4] was summoned,

[4] A helicopter, hey? I wish! Together with 3 farm workers, we improvised a stretcher and carried you all the way, up hill and down

and I was airlifted to hospital. I had sustained a serious head wound to the right side, which caused paralysis to the left side of my body. My brain swelled and the doctors feared the damage could be permanent. I had thirty-five stitches to the open wound on the head. I had broken teeth to the left upper jaw, but by the time I regained consciousness, the teeth were crowned. I broke my left collar bone and four left ribs, my pelvis on the left side was dislocated, my left tibia broke and protruded through the skin, and my left ankle broke. As I was paralysed on the left side, I felt no pain from the broken bones. My left leg was in a cast, and the doctor had told my mother that all other bones would heal naturally as I was bedridden. About a month passed, and I was removed from the ICU and placed in a normal ward.

After about three months of being bedridden, my parents came to visit me one evening. As my father walked towards me, past the foot of my bed, he waved his car keys over my exposed toes on my left foot, and said: "How're you doing sport?" suddenly, a reflex kicked in, and my toes moved once. My mother noticed what had just happened and quickly ran to the nurse's station to report what she had just witnessed. Within minutes the sister in charge of the ward, and the doctor on standby were beside me. They were overjoyed at the news, and the doctor, who was clearly in disbelief, conducted the same test. As he ran his pen over my toes, they reacted in an unconscious twitch. The doctor, who had obviously been gravely concerned about my recovery, beamed from ear to ear, and the sister in charge shared his delight. He touched my big toe and asked if I could feel anything. I smiled back at him and nodded my head slightly in acknowledgement. "Soon you will be back on the rugby field, son. I'll contact Dr Davidson right away and tell him the good news."

My mother kept wiping back the tears while my visibly emotional father fought back the tears. My recovery was slow, but six weeks later, a physiotherapist taught me how to walk on

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dale to The Oaks, a unique lifestyle farm and holiday resort nestled in the heart of Byrne Village, KwaZulu-Natal, where an ordinary metro ambulance collected you. One of your classmates and friends, Robin Williams, drove my car from where I had parked at the farmhouse to call for the ambulance. – publisher.

a walking aid. A few, weeks later, I had recovered sufficiently to be discharged from the hospital. Dr Davidson told my father that the best thing he could do for me was get me into a gym.

I was in a calliper, but this did not deter my father from sending me to gym. Every day I attended a gym that was previously an old church. The green, worn-out carpets were stained and smelled of sweat. There was nothing fancy about this gym, and everyone who attended the gym was serious about exercise. The owner of the gym, who was also a professional weight lifter, took good care of me, and knew when he could push me a little harder.

During my third year in high school, I stamped my authority over my peers. I was well-built from years in the gym and had recovered fully from my accident. Where I went, they wanted to go, and what I did, they also wanted to do. I led, and they followed. I developed outstanding leadership qualities. I would lead and others would follow. I was persuasive and could manipulate any situation to my advantage. I did not negotiate, and I always set the tone. I started to smoke secretly, and soon my friends would also start smoking. That same year, I formed a gang called the Brethren Brothers. I selected only five of my best, and good-looking friends to be part of the gang. We were not the kind of gang that were headbangers, thugs or hooligans; we were nice guys. We were always well-groomed and well-spoken. Swearing and vulgar language were not permitted, and girls, who were plentiful, had to be well treated. Anyone who failed to obey the codes would be severely punished and expelled from the gang. Within only a few short months, the news of this newly formed gang spread like wildfire, and other boys wanted to be part of the gang. Our numbers grew, and before the end of that year, I had like-minded boys from other, and even rival schools, in my gang.

Within the first year, we had the cars, the bikes and the girls. Many of our peers envied us, and many tried to be part of the gang, but I wouldn't just allow anybody into the gang. There were strict requirements in looks and behaviour. We set fashion trends and were weird at times. I recall we created a trend once, which consisted of `long johns', leather sandals with a long-sleeved shirt that hung loosely, and a brooch and feather earring

in the left ear only. We also introduced a fashion trend of wearing light blue jeans rolled up around the ankles with moccasin shoes, a tight golf shirt and studs in the ear. When we dressed a certain way to discos, we found others starting to mimic our trends. We also created hairstyles and accessories and perfected a unique style of dancing, which others also adopted. Life was so good. We had the world in the palm of our hands. This was the eighties, and everything was crazy.

I heard years after I had completed my matric that the Brethren Brothers still existed, but the gang had lost its flare, and the members were now thugs and head bangers.

My Dad

The year was 1941. My dad and four of his friends, one being Ian Player[5], decided to undertake their biggest adventure yet. They discussed taking on the mighty Umzimduzi River and paddle from Pietermaritzburg to Durban. At first the idea sounded ludicrous. The river was untamed and no one had undertaken this adventure before. The more they discussed the idea the better it sounded. Ian Player who was an adventurer encouraged his mates to take up the challenge. It was decided to build canoes out of ply-wood wrapped in canvas. Each would carry with them their food and medical supplies. They would leave Pietermaritzburg at the Queen Elizabeth Bridge that crossed the `Duzi' River at the park in Pietermaritzburg and the first to get to the Umgeni river bridge in Durban would be the winner.

This sounded like a great adventure and never did they imagine it would become one of the most gruelling river races in the world. Years later Dr Ian Player described how they paddled along the river with river snakes at their sides. Wild animals would drink at the river's edge in the Valley of a Thousand Hills. Crocodiles floated under the water level, hoping to prey on animals at the water's edge. They also needed to contend with natives who lived in the valley and who had never seen white men before. Often, they would get pelted with stones as they paddled by. My dad took with him a small cage of homing pigeons. He would attach a note to the pigeon's leg and set it free

[5] Dr Ian Player, brother of golfing legend Gary Player, founder of `The Wilderness Leadership School'. [See Linscott, 2013]

to fly back home. All five friends completed the race. Every year, the number of participants grew to the race we know today. My father was born in 1927, which made him only fourteen years of age when he undertook the challenge.

Two years later, the same five friends discussed what they could do as another adventure. One friend dared my father to hitch-hike from Durban to Joburg, then to Cape Town and back to Durban, all in seven days. If he completes the task, and within time they would buy him six beers. My father accepted the challenge, but challenged Ian Player to paddle the Umzimkulu River, from the town of Umzimkulu to Port Shepstone, and then walk along the beach to Durban, also within seven days. The first to arrive in Durban would win six beers. It only took a handshake to seal the deal. The two men set off on their respective challenges within a few days.

Six days later, my father arrived in Durban, totally exhausted from the challenge that he had just completed. On the eighth day, Ian Player arrived in Durban. He was dehydrated and sunburned from the excursion he had just completed. A few days later, after both contestants had recovered, they joined their friends and discussed their respective challenges. Ian Player explained that he had experienced many of the same challenges experienced during their Umzimduzi River Race, with wild animals and primitive natives. He commented that the rivers differed in that the Umzinkulu was a bigger river with less white water which made the river more strenuous as he needed to paddle more. The distance paddled was much the same as the Duzi Race from Pietermaritzburg to Durban. He also found it challenging to pull his canoe along the beach to Durban. My father shared the reward with his mates, who laughed about the adventure and wondered what they could get up to next.

My father, a big, broad-shouldered man, worked as a millwright on the railways, and my mother was an English teacher, who was eventually promoted to principal. My father believed in many things, one being that you don't just get money. If you wanted it you had to work for it, so I spent my Saturdays in the garden, mowing the lawn, cleaning the flower beds, pruning trees or whatever else he wanted me to do. He would reward me by giving me a few rand for my hard work. I soon realised that a few rand a week was never enough, as I also enjoyed having a

few beers with my friends, and boys needed money to have the prettiest girls and all the privileges of having money. At the age of seventeen, after working out in the gym for three hours a day for two years, I entered a bodybuilding competition and came second. That competition opened doors for me, and it wasn't long before I was offered a job as a dancer every Thursday night during ladies' night. I accepted and danced for the ladies in my G-string and oiled lean body. The dance would last about thirty minutes, and I made more money in thirty minutes having fun than I did working hard in the garden for a year. I did this for about a year and made a lot of money. My father gave me enough freedom to do whatever I wanted, but if I was arrested, I couldn't call him. I had to fight my own battles.

After a night of heavy partying, I drove my friends and girlfriends home while being under the influence of alcohol. My driving abilities must have been so impaired that the local police van started to chase me in an attempt to stop me. I drove through alleys, back roads and side roads, to avoid arrest, but all my efforts were in vain, and I was eventually pulled over and taken to the local police station. The constable, who was not much older than we were, pitied me and let me off on a warning.

Four friends and I sat in my bedroom discussing what we intended to do after completing matric. Expectations were high as our parents expected us to study further and attend university. Boys who attended school at Maritzburg College were automatically expected to further their studies at university. We had no idea what to study and what career path we should follow. All we knew was that we had received our "call up" for National service. We laughed nervously at each other and at the different Army units we were called to attend for two years. I suggested that we smoke a joint. It seemed a lot more fun than talking about military service. I told my friends that on one of the many occasions when I ran away from home, I stayed in Margate for two weeks. I slept in the public bathroom on the beach and lived on Ghost Pops and bread. During my stay in Margate, I befriended some surfers who would smoke dope with me and sometimes buy me a burger or chips. I enjoyed my carefree days but knew that, at some point, I would have to return home. My new friends helped me with loose change, and soon, I had

enough money to catch a train home. Whilst I was walking on the platform at Durban Station, a young black guy walked briskly towards me. I looked over his shoulder and saw a railway policeman with a dog walking briskly behind him. As this black guy approached me, he quickly handed me a handful of crumpled-up newspaper. Without hesitation, I placed the crumpled-up newspaper in my pocket. I had a suspicion about what it was but didn't have time to examine it as the policeman was fast approaching. I walked casually, trying not to take notice of the policeman. When the policeman and his dog approached me, his dog paused briefly and growled. My heart pounded in my throat, and I felt droplets of sweat on my face. Fortunately, the handler was focused on the black guy, so he roughly pulled his dog and kept walking after him. Only once I was on the train did I remove the crumpled newspaper from my pocket and examine its contents. Just as I thought, fresh marijuana was wrapped in the newspaper. My heart beat pounded in nervous excitement. Beads of sweat formed on my forehead as I thought of how nearly I was arrested for possession of dope.

Now was a good time to smoke this dope. My friends' eyes grew large, and they chuckled nervously in disbelief when I removed the crumpled newspaper from inside one of my shoes at the bottom of my cupboard. I opened the wrapping, and the unmistakable odour of marijuana filled the air. We sat on the floor and passed the "slow boat" around, allowing each of us a drag of the toxic smoke. After a short while, we were laughing uncontrollably.

One friend jokingly asked what we would say if the cops should find us now. This was a new joke, and again, we laughed uncontrollably. After a while, I dared one in the group to join the police. We burst out in laughter again, and once the laughter died down, he nodded his head, and soon we all dared each other.

A week later, we were at the police head office in Church Street. Once we completed the application form, we were ushered to an examination room, where we completed the psychological evaluation and were told to expect the results in the post within a week. If our applications were successful, we had to undergo a physical examination.

My father was thrilled at the news as he often encouraged me to work for the State. He believed that the State offered the

best job security with full medical aid, a pension scheme and a 13th cheque. The government at the time looked after white employees, and the benefits of working for the state outweighed the benefits of working in the private sector. My mother, on the other hand, was not so thrilled. Her expectations of me were far higher than that of an underpaid policeman.

Within a week, we received a letter from the provincial commander's office congratulating us on our successful application. I met with my friends, and we decided to go together to the district surgeon for a physical examination. I warned my friends that I read somewhere that dope can be detected in the urine for up to seven days, so if we were required to submit a sample, we should say that our bladders are empty and that we would submit a sample the following day. I walked with a heavy limp on my left leg but thought that the country was on the brink of civil war and that the government would gladly accept anyone brave or stupid enough to become a policeman. As I had predicted, we were expected to submit a urine sample, but we were unable to do so. We promised to submit a sample on the following day. We paid a friend's younger brother for a sample each, which we submitted the following day. The district surgeon handed each of us a report containing his findings and told us to take the report to the Police Headquarters.

A week later, we worked as student constables at our local police station. The constable who had warned me about drunken driving recognised me but just shook his head in disbelief. I was about to become a policeman.

Three weeks later, about fifty student constables from different police stations in Pietermaritzburg assembled on the main platform at the railway station. Each was dressed in either a suit or smart pants with a matching jacket and tie. We chatted nervously leaving our parents clinging to each other. All mothers clutching a tissue and wiping their noses and eyes. A Warrant officer called us closer and read our names from a clipboard, to which we had to respond that we were `present'. The locomotive picked up speed, and we kept our heads out of the windows, looking back at our parents as we were about to start our lives as adults. The platform slowly disappeared in the distance.

My mother waited for me to complete my schooling before divorcing my dad. They sold the house, and they shared the profits. My mother bought a two-bedroom flat on Longmarket Street, and my dad bought a one-bedroom flat in an adjacent block. I felt that he still loved her and might have stood a chance, but this never happened. They remained friends.

On one of my weekend passes, my dad called a meeting at his flat and invited my mother and me only. We sat in his tiny lounge when he started speaking.

”My boy, I want you to understand that I will always love your mother, and what I am about to tell you is not out of anger, disrespect or hurt; I just think that you’ve grown up and have a right to know.” He took a gulp of his warm beer before continuing.

“I am not your biological father,” he said, looking me straight in the eyes. I wasn’t surprised. As a young boy, I often wondered how it was possible to be so different and have so very little in common.

He took another gulp of beer and continued; “Your mother was an English teacher at Brighton Beach Primary and had an affair with the headmaster. I don’t blame her for what she did, and I will never use it against her. She was young and very attractive, and I regret spending so much time in the pub. I’ve raised you as my own and hope that I gave you a good upbringing.” A tear came to his eye as he took another swig of his beer.

Mom just sat on the chair and didn’t say a word. She didn’t look at Dad once whilst he spoke. She just kept staring at a stain on the carpet. I noticed that she, too, was on the verge of crying.

”It’s okay,” is all I could say as I stood up from the chair. ”I love you both dearly, and this won’t change how I feel about you.” A smile of relief covered my mom’s face, and tears welled up in her eyes. She stood up and hugged me. I felt her hands shake on my back as she hugged me. We hugged, and it was never spoken about again.

I later asked my mother what my biological father’s name was, and she told me. Years later, I decided it was time to meet my dad. I didn’t quite know how to start the conversation or how I should introduce myself. He was probably still married and likely to have children my age.

I arrived at Brighton Beach Primary and took a deep breath to compose myself before asking the receptionist after my dad. She looked puzzled as to why I should be asking after him, but told me that he had passed away on the golf course three months prior from a heart attack.

Training was intense, both physically and academically. Not much more can be said about the training except that every day was a struggle, and every day, at least one student constable would resign with immediate effect. I was not totally surprised to learn that our beds were made exactly the same as I had learned in the naval cadets, with the hospital corners, ironed and brushed top blanket and sheet folded over the blanket the exact width of the pillow. I had the edge over other students as I had done it all before. I was also familiar with marching and various firearm drills, which I managed with relative ease. I also had prior firearm training and knew how to dismantle and assemble an R1 semi-automatic rifle.

At the naval cadets, we fired the R1 rifle at the shooting range, so I was accustomed to the drill and memories of how, as young boys, we were drilled with this firearm, and the excitement and fear of handling this deadly weapon came flooding back. Now I was more grown up and had the edge over other students as I was familiar with this weapon and drill. Most students detested ironing, and many had never used an iron before. I ironed well and thanked my parents for sending me to the naval cadets, where I learned to iron. I recalled how the back of our shirts had to be precisely ironed with three evenly spaced stripes on the back. These matchbox distance stripes were starched, and I recalled so vividly the pleasant smell of `Blue Ribbon' spray-on starch. I saw the opportunity to make extra money, so I ironed others' shirts and pants for extra money.

Six months passed, and we became excited that soon we would be deployed to various police stations around the country to start our careers as policemen. By the time we completed the basic training, we were familiar with all registers and procedures in the charge office. We were told that we would need to complete the mandatory four years in uniform before we were permitted to specialise to a unit, so we were prepared for what lay ahead.

I ran with a limp, favouring my right leg, but it was only due to my gutsy determination to successfully complete all physical training that kept me from being discharged from the Police College.

At the final passing out parade, the Commissioner of Police addressed us, reminding us that we, as proud citizens of South Africa, had reached the pinnacle in our struggle to keep the country sovereign and that each of us had a moral obligation and duty towards this country.

After a thirty-minute speech, the Commissioner of Police sat down, and we were brought to attention and marched off the parade ground. Our sergeant marched us to our barracks. He told us that we were not being deployed to our police stations and that we were one of three platoons who were to undergo riot training for three weeks. My heart sank. Just when I thought all the "*opvoks*" were over and my life would return to normal, I now had to endure another bloody three weeks of this. We were instructed to reassemble at the main entrance with a duffle bag packed for three weeks. The thirty-five constables in my platoon looked at each other in disbelief. `Shit, what next?' I thought.

Within fifteen minutes, we assembled at the front gate, as instructed. Outside the college, three police buses stood waiting. Other constables who had completed the basic training drove out of the gate and stared at us in relief as we made our way to the bus. We placed our baggage under the bus in the baggage compartment, and in a single file, we climbed into the bus. I made sure I had a window seat as I was being taken where I had never been before and took this opportunity to sightsee.

The three buses travelled in convoy through Pretoria and turned north on the N1 highway. Most of us sat in silence during the trip. We stared at everything or maybe nothing through the side windows, each consumed in his own thoughts.

After heading north on the national freeway for at least an hour and a half, we felt the bus reduce speed and take an off-ramp. The bus travelled along a deserted two-lane road until we passed through a small town. If any of us had not been inquisitive about where we were heading, we might have missed this town. The main road through the town was flanked by a garage, a bottle store, a superette and about ten dilapidated houses. I looked for

a sign with the name of this town, but as we exited the town as soon as we entered it, I saw no sign. We travelled for about another twenty kilometres when we heard the driver apply the air brakes, and the bus slowed down. He turned right and travelled until we reached buildings with a guarded gate at the entrance. The policeman on duty handed the driver a register, which he signed and handed back to the guard on duty. Soon, all three buses were parked in front of the admin block, and the buses huffed as the airbrakes were released and the engines turned off. This place was in the heart of the bushveld. We were in midwinter, and the bush and indigenous thorn trees were brown. The fully grown thorn trees also felt the effects of winter, as not one tree had any leaves. The one-meter-tall grass was brown from the lack of rain.

All three platoons were led to the accommodation area, which was no more than a camouflaged rectangular building just big enough to house thirty-five trainees. We were assigned a sergeant who told us that we could have the rest of the afternoon off and that dinner would be at 18:00. The platoon had spent the last six months together, so we knew each other well, and one thing we had in common was that we longed to be at home, or to be with our girlfriends. I was surprised, or maybe I shouldn't have been, but the dinner tasted just like the dinner at the police college. It was bland, and everything was boiled.

The following morning, we started our day at 05:00 hours, with the usual inspection and five-kilometre run. After breakfast, consisting of a bowl of cold, lumpy oats, powdered scrambled eggs and two slices of bread, we were handed our R1 rifle with twenty rounds of ammunition. Our drill sergeant then took us on a ten-kilometre run along a narrow gravel road until we arrived at the shooting range. We undertook the mundane shooting practice, which we had become so accustomed to over the last six months, before we ran another about two kilometres until we arrived at a small dam.

Our group leader ordered us into the dam, which was totally dry and commanded us to sit on the bone-dry bottom. There was a natural embankment around the dam, and we sat there looking up at him. He removed a rucksack from his back and produced five teargas canisters. He instructed us not to move as we had to feel the effects teargas had. He removed the safety

pin and threw the gas canisters into the dry dam, where we remained seated, cross-legged, with our firearms pointing upwards. The gas canisters fell between us and hissed as they gave off a blue-white smoke.

Instinctively, we covered our mouths so as not to inhale the toxic gas. As soon as the gas came into contact with our sweaty skin, it burned like hell. Every part of our bodies was wet from the run we had undertaken, and every square inch of our skin burned. We could not open our eyes as the toxic smoke affected our eyesight. Breathing was nearly impossible, and the situation became dire. We heard him laugh out loud as he stood on the embankment, looking down at us. None of us had experienced the effects of teargas before, and some guys started to panic as we became short of breath, not being able to hold their breath for much longer. We remained seated until one guy fainted in the thick smoke. Our group leader's laughter was cut short when he realised what had happened and had to run into the teargas to rescue the boy who had fainted. Not very impressed with what had just happened, he ordered us out of the dam while he tried to resuscitate the boy who had fainted and then started to vomit and gasp for air. We scrambled over the embankment, gasping for air. The guys were visibly shaken by the experience, and most burst into tears from the burning effects of the teargas on their skin and eyes. Guys were coughing, trying to exhale the toxic smoke. Snot streamed from our noses as we stood with our hands placed on our knees, trying to recover from our ordeal. The boy who fainted eventually recovered, and our group leader caught his breath. We undertook the jog back in silence as the guys were visibly distraught by the experience.

Back at the base, we were taught the different formations in a riot situation and practised them over and over until we wanted to vomit. By the end of the day, we were exhausted, and most of us chose sleep over dinner.

The following day, we were issued helmets, shields, sjamboks, and a shotgun. This was the riot gear used in crowd control, and again, we practiced the different formations over and over until they became like clockwork, and everyone had a clear understanding of the procedures involved.

We were trained in the use of water cannons, fifty-millimetre rifles used to fire tear gas grenades and rubber bullets

and the use and functions of different hand grenades and the use of explosives. After three weeks training, we were fully competent in riot control. Our last week there was a total waste of time as there was nothing new to teach us and by that time, we were super fit so not only the usual "*opvok*" could break us. Our group leader used this time just to stuff us around but we had quickly matured to become tough young policeman that could not be broken.

We only had a few days left of training, and our enthusiasm and motivation were totally depleted. We were what was known as "gatvol." Our attitude did not deter our group leader, who made it very clear that we were still in training and under his command until we completed the course. Around midday, he marched us, in full kit, to the stores adjacent to the admin block and handed us each a wooden ammo box containing flares. Far in the distance, overlooking the base, was a mountain known as Goliath. The sheer size was intimidating. The mountain stood proudly, about five kilometres from the base. Her steep sides were quite visible from where we were. He ordered us to run up this mountain with the ammo box, and when we reached the top, we had to set off the flares into the air. We then had to run back to the base with the empty ammo box, where we all had to stand in formation on the parade ground. If we did not return to the base by 18:00, we would miss out on dinner and would have to go to sleep hungry.

We weighed up our options and whether or not the crappy dinner was worth running up the mountain and getting back in time, and we agreed to take a jog, which infuriated our instructor. Fatigue over the last six months of training, and now, this three-week training has visibly taken its toll on our physical and mental state. The closer we came to the mountain, the steeper the climb. Once we were about halfway up the incline, we were totally out of breath. Some of the guys were reduced to crawling up the incline, and most of us were surprised at her sheerness. We realised from the base that Goliath was steep, but only once we were ascending did we realise exactly how steep she actually was. We helped and encouraged each other to climb this mountain. Some guys crawled on all fours while others assisted in carrying their ammo boxes and firearms. The sun had disappeared behind the mountain by the time we were nearing

her summit, and the air was cool in her shade. Eventually, we made it to the top. We sat on some rocks, gasping for air, and some guys started crying out loudly out of frustration and exhaustion. We sat there trying to regain our composure and, after some time, agreed that we should set off the flares, as instructed. Some guys were too exhausted to set off their flares into the night sky, so we assisted them. Knowing very well that we had missed dinner, we decided to amble down and head back to base. We arrived back at the base well into the night, and our group leader was nowhere to be seen. Too exhausted and hungry to put in the effort to find him, we decided to go to bed. We would face the music the next day.

The following day, after breakfast, we handed him our empty ammo boxes. I wondered if he stayed up at all to witness the flares being set off or if he decided to call it a day and go to bed. He seemed well rested, so I concluded that he didn't wait to witness the brightly coloured flares in the clear night sky.

It was finally time to leave this base. We had received our training, and it was time to go home. Or so we thought. We assembled on the parade ground, believing that we would be dismissed and that soon we would be on the bus back to Pretoria. Whilst standing to attention in platoon form, we were addressed by the base commander. We were expecting the usual speech of how we had successfully completed the course and that our country needs us, and all the usual bullshit about us having to fight to keep this country sovereign, but that was not the case. The commander addressed us and told us that there were riots in Germiston and other parts of the East Rand and that we were deployed there to deal with that situation. It was as if someone had punched me in the stomach. I instantly felt nauseous, and my heart raced in my chest with anger. We shook our heads in disbelief, our mouths slightly open. "Yes," said the base commander. "That's right. We're at war against all people who will do anything in their power to destabilise this country. Now go out there and put everything you've been taught to good use."

"Dismissed!" he ordered whilst standing to attention. With our heads down, we made our way to the bus, which was already idling near the admin block. I had a sense of deep despair and regret for joining the police and wondered how I could get out of it. I then remembered the four-year contract I had signed when

joining and realised then that I was pretty stuck in this crap job. Buying myself out would mean being deployed to a military base and undergoing all this shit again. I had come this far. It would be better just to stick it out for a little longer. This, too, shall pass.

The buses travelled in convoy to the police college, where we were handed our riot gear, and without hesitation, we were on the freeway again until we arrived at the police station in Germiston. We formed three platoons of thirty-five constables and stood to attention, waiting for the station commander to address us. The sun pelted down on us as we waited about half an hour until finally, the station commander appeared from the red-brick police station. He told us that we would be deployed to various troubled areas around Germiston and that group one, which I was in, would be deployed to the railway station. We would be housed in railway sleepers. These coaches were currently not in use and parked at the railway station. Each group would be assigned a sergeant from the police station, and we would be working eighteen-hour shifts. Our duties were to patrol the railway station on foot, and to maintain order. We were dismissed and taken to the railway station by our sergeant. Four constables shared a compartment in the stationary railway sleeper. Soon, we were divided into shifts, and a duty roster was compiled.

It was just as the station commander had told us. I had to patrol Platform 1 for eighteen hours, walking up and down, dressed in full riot gear. Others had to patrol the other platforms, whilst some patrolled the main entrance, near the ticket office. We were strategically placed around the railway station.

After our first few days there, our sergeant announced that there was a railway strike and that railway employees were picketing in town near the railway station. Five guys were left to continue their duties in and around the railway station whilst the rest of us ran out into the streets in front of the railway station. I noticed that shops around the railway station had closed and that they had steel rollup doors covering their windows and doors. About twenty black males were picketing with placards and sticks. They were chanting in their own language, and the situation was getting quite tense. Our sergeant commanded us to get into linear formation. With our shields in front of us and sjambok in our right hand, we stood firm, knowing that if the

situation got out of control, we had our shotguns over our shoulders to fall back on. We stared at these picketers through the plastic cover on our helmets and monitored the situation. Our sergeant decided to end the picketing before the situation got out of control, so he ordered us to advance. With sjamboks swinging wildly, we ran into this crowd. Some managed to run away, whilst others received a good beating.

Back at the railway station, our sergeant instructed us to patrol the underground tunnels leading between the various platforms. When commuters scurried through the tunnels to get to another platform, where they would catch another train, we were instructed to whip them with our sjamboks. Our sergeant didn't care if we whipped a child, a lady or an elderly person. They needed to get whipped to teach them to be orderly at the railway station.

That night, I lay in my bed and was deeply disturbed by what I had witnessed that day. I could not understand why people who were on their way home from a hard day's work needed to be savagely whipped and beaten. Why did women, children, and even the elderly need to get whipped when they were only in a hurry to catch their interlinking train? What was I doing here? This was against my relatively liberal upbringing and moral beliefs. My parents never spoke about politics in front of me, and I knew that they were not racist. They tolerated and respected black people and accepted that black people stayed in townships and attended schools for blacks only. This was just a way of life, and it was accepted that way. I had never heard of Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo or even Sam Njoma from Angola until Nelson Mandela's release from prison in the early 1990s. This barbaric behaviour was foreign to me, and just outright wrong. I battled for days to come to terms with this, and at my age, I just didn't understand it. I vowed that I would not again be part of a senseless onslaught of innocent people. I would rather face disciplinary action than take part in this barbaric behaviour.

A few days later, it happened again. We were divided into groups and armed with shields, helmets, shotguns and sjamboks. Some had to patrol the underground tunnels, and others remained on the platforms. Our sergeant instructed us to beat everyone commuting as people were becoming unruly. To my displeasure, I found myself in a tunnel and watched as

commuters scurried past me to catch an interlinking train; I just stood and watched them as my colleagues shouted and humiliated them. Some swung their sjamboks wildly from side-to-side, striking commuters on their backs and legs. I realised that I would be no better than my colleagues if I partook in this senseless behaviour.

The following day was my rest day, so I decided to walk into Germiston town. I came across a second-hand car dealer and bought a car on finance. I loved my Datsun Pulsar. It was bright red in colour, with a sunroof, mag wheels, and spotlights. Finance was approved in an hour, and I couldn't wait to get away from all this madness. I filled the tank with petrol and felt a huge sense of relief come over me as I opened the driver's side window and accelerated out of Germiston.

Seven hours later, I arrived home. My parents were so happy and surprised to see me. My mother commented on how much weight I had lost and kept offering me food, until I wanted to pop. We sat in the lounge, and I explained to them why I was at home. My father thought I was on a pass, but realised the trouble I was in when I explained why I had run away and was on AWOL. He looked at me sternly and advised that I return immediately before I made the situation worse. My mother sat listening intently, but nodded her head in agreement with my father. "These are the times we live in, my boy." He said, looking me directly in the eye. I realised that I would not be able to persuade them otherwise, so I agreed to drive back to Germiston the following morning. The following morning my mother was up early and prepared food for the road [*padkos*] for me. My mother hugged and kissed me goodbye, and with a wave from my father, I drove off. I decided to rather spend a few days with my girlfriend. I needed to get my head around what I had experienced, and maybe I just needed a shoulder to cry on.

I went to my girlfriend's home, and she was just as surprised by my visit. She flung her arms around me and kissed me madly as I got out of my car. She invited me into her one-bedroom cottage and sat with me in the lounge. We enjoyed sandwiches and coffee. I told her that I was not on pass, and that I had run away without leave. She sat listening to my ordeal without saying a word. Finally, and out of the blue, she said,

"There is something I need to tell you." My immediate thought was that she was pregnant, and before I could ask her, she said; "Don't worry, I'm not pregnant." I felt myself exhale a sigh of relief. "I've been seeing Sean. I'm sorry. I've been lonely, and he's been here for me." It would have come as less of a shock if she had hit me across the face with a wet fish. "Sean, you mean my friend Sean Watkins?"

"He was not your friend; he was our friend," she was quick to correct me. "Yes, that Sean. We've been dating for three months now. I'm so sorry. I just couldn't be alone any longer."

"Shit! What next?" I thought. "Well, thanks for nothing," I said as I rose from the sofa. She leaned closer to give me a hug, but I stepped back to avoid making contact with her. Soon, I was on the freeway heading back to Germiston, against my will and maybe better judgment.

When I started my shift again, I found that my group sergeant had been replaced. His replacement, a much older black sergeant, was more sympathetic toward us. Even though he was our senior in age and rank, he treated us with respect, maybe because we were white, but the reasons for his kindness and compassion didn't matter. I enjoyed working under him. Things changed for the better, and that's all that mattered. Beatings on commuters had also come to an end, and the whole working environment and attitude of my colleagues had changed.

We were eventually deployed to our police stations, where our lives as police officers would begin. I didn't see many of my mates because we were scattered all across the country. I have since heard that one mate specialised and, more than thirty years later, is still in the force. Another was killed in the line of duty within the first two years, and one became a detective and eventually committed suicide. Another resigned after completing the mandatory four years.

A group of about one hundred young policemen assembled at the main police station in Pietermaritzburg. After roll call, to ensure everyone's presence, we were allotted to individual police stations. I answered to my name, and Jamie and I were deployed to Matat. I was rather relieved that I was deployed outside of Pietermaritzburg as I still felt angry by my girlfriends' betrayal. I had made up my mind that if I was deployed to a police station

within the Pietermaritzburg District, I would immediately ask for a cross-transfer with anyone deployed outside the district, but Matat? I had never heard of that place, and the best direction I could get was that it was near the Drakensberg Mountains.

Three hours after leaving Pietermaritzburg, I drove into a town covered in snow. I had never seen snow before, and it felt as if I had driven into a fairy-tale town. Finding the police station was simple as the blue light flickered in the snowflakes on the left-hand side of the main road. I parked my vehicle outside, and a constable on duty directed me to a rectangular corrugated iron building at the back of the admin block. I made my way up a series of concrete steps and arrived at the barracks. I sheepishly entered the corrugated building only to find two sergeants on their beds drinking. Steel cupboards were used as dividers as this building had no internal dividing walls. There was no insulation on the walls, and it felt colder inside than it did outside. Snow covered the Maluti Mountains in the distance, and an icy cold wind swept through the town. The sergeants looked at me briefly with bloodshot eyes and pointed to a vacant bed.

Once I had unpacked and settled in, I heard the sergeants calling me. New recruits were called cadets. Both sergeants had too much to drink and were clutching a glass of brandy and coke. “Tomorrow you need to buy a case of beer for us and twelve beers and a half jack for yourself. You need to drink the two six-packs and a half jack in one hour. If you don’t, you can take your bed and sleep outside. Understood?” The following day, I met the station commander and was assigned a shift. Fortunately, my shift was on rest days, so I had the next two days off.

In a very intoxicated state, I thought of the first time I got this drunk. My friend and I had never been drunk before, and we wondered what it felt like. We decided to buy wine from a local supermarket as we were underage and not permitted to buy alcohol at a bottle store. We had no idea how much we needed to consume to get drunk, so we concluded that two bottles of wine each should be enough. At the time, I drove the family car without a licence as I was still underage, and over weekends, I took my friends to the “socials”. Various schools would convert the school hall into a dance area. A DJ would operate the music from the stage, and the hall would be kitted out with strobe lights, mirror balls and sometimes smoke machines. A minimal

entry fee would be charged, and the school would generate some much-needed money. My friend and I attended a social at a girls-only school. We expected a lot of "talent" to be there and hoped we would be overwhelmed by good-looking girls. We dressed in our fashionable and possibly weird attire and descended on the school. It was only when we removed the wrapping around the bottle that we realised we didn't have a corkscrew, so I used the car keys to break the cork and forced it back inside the bottle. The contents would only be released if the cork floated to the top, so we needed to turn the bottle upside down and take big gulps of red wine at a time. We shared the first opened bottle, and we felt light-headed and slightly nauseous. Before we could make a good impression on the hordes of pretty girls, we felt sick and started to vomit. Fortunately, we had not entered the school premises by that time, so we vomited in tandem, leaning against the car. I remember that we did not get to dance, but I don't remember driving home.

Just when I thought I had completed all physical training, I was summoned to Pretoria to undergo "Border training." This, I was told, was compulsory and all policemen had to undergo the three-week training. I caught the train from Pietermaritzburg, and it brought back memories of the last train trip, when my mother was in tears as she waved me goodbye on the way to Police College. This time nobody stood on the platform to bid me farewell. I was on my own, but I was more familiar with what to expect. On my arrival at the railway station in Pretoria, I was ushered into a much smaller bus with about twenty other constables. I had travelled this road before and did not experience the same nervous tension as I did on my first trip to this training facility. I was no longer a student constable and was sure I would be treated with a little respect. The trip seemed much shorter than the first time, and soon we arrived at the training facility. We stepped off the bus with our "*Balsak*" (Duffel bag) over our shoulders. If I thought our treatment would be different, I was surely mistaken. Within minutes, we heard shouting from the direction of the parade ground. The base commander was yelling at us to "*tree aan*." With our duffel bags over our shoulders, we ran across the parking area and over the sand parade ground towards the base commander. We stood to attention whilst he addressed us. All the usual bullshit we've

heard before. Welcoming us, that we should be familiar with the procedures, and that we needed to undergo this training as we would be required to defend this country in a bush war. Attacks on civilians had been intensified, and the next few years would be paramount in defending the country at the hands of communists who would stop at nothing to overthrow the government, Blah-Blah-Blah.

Our platoon sergeant was introduced to us. Lance Sergeant Pretorius looked as if he was still in Police College. He was slender and wore a moustache that most of us could achieve by the age of eighteen. Without hesitation, he commanded us to turn to the right, and soon we found ourselves running across the parade ground and to our barracks at Charlie camp. Nothing had changed since my last stay here. The food was still bland and boring. The bushveld was still dry and fawn.

I realise now how propaganda and brainwashing were used as part of our training. We were shown videos of a group of black males forcing a car tyre over the body of their victim before dousing him with petrol and setting him alight. The chanting crowd stood around their victim, watching with pleasure as he screamed in pain until he eventually burned to death.

Another video depicted an unruly crowd of protestors who were chanting with sticks and spears while stoning a woman they accused of being a witch. As this woman tried to escape with blood pouring over her face from a number of head wounds, a tip truck arrived with a policeman hiding in the bin. The tip truck stopped when within firing range ten policemen stood up and aimed their shotguns at the crowd. The command resulted in gunfire aimed at the crowd. Within minutes, at least thirty black men lay on the gravel road; all had sustained shotgun wounds. These men and the woman succumbed to their wounds.

The last, and most memorable was of a crime scene. A white man and his wife lay on a double bed. Both had been hacked with bush knives. The husband had been decapitated, and the woman, presumably his wife, had been stripped of all her clothes. Both lay on a bed covered in blood. The wife had been cut from her vagina to her stomach, leaving the intestines exposed. The couple had two daughters aged about ten and twelve. Both girls lay naked on their single beds. Sharp objects had been forced into their rectums, resulting in internal bleeding

and causing a slow and very painful death. Guys mumbled in anger as they watched the video.

The screening of these videos stirred up emotions, and we left the lecture enraged by the gruesome videos, especially the sadistic slaughter of the white family. Also, as part of the government's propaganda and brain-washing program, we were shown clips of violent, barbaric black males armed with bush knives and *knobkerries*. During this scene, the males beat a black woman with sticks before placing a tyre around her chest and dousing her in petrol. The woman screamed for mercy, but her fate was predetermined. One of the young males lit a piece of newspaper before tossing it onto the woman. The woman was suddenly engulfed in flames, and her cries became faint until she became quiet, leaving the crowd chanting around her.

The following morning, we stood inspection at 05:00, and as I suspected, it was followed by a five-kilometre run. After breakfast, we ran into the bushveld for at least half an hour until we arrived at a camouflaged area that would serve as our classroom. Our sergeant advised us to take these lessons seriously as they could save our lives. We learned about the different Russian-made rifles, handguns, hand grenades and bombs. We also learned the different hand signals and camouflage techniques. Every day we would undertake the ten-kilometre run to the shooting range. We learned different walking and attacking formations. One day we were placed inside a bunker and handed a defensive hand grenade. When it was my turn, I quickly pulled the pin and threw the grenade, thinking that it might explode in my hand, blowing it completely from my arm. I was crapped on for not throwing it far enough, but all that was on my mind was to release the grenade as quickly as possible. We learned about "bivvies"; a plastic sheet used to make a tent or covering when buried underground. We needed to partake in a mock attack on terrorists by laying an ambush. Our instructors would imitate the terrorists. We were provided daily with a one-meal "rat pack."

As part of our training, we had to do "Pole P.T." Each trainee was handed a pole that was about two metres in length and about 300mm in diameter. Each pole weighed about forty kilograms. With the pole over our shoulders, we ran in formation to the shooting range about ten kilometres away. Our instructor

ran alongside us to set the pace. When a trainee stopped to vomit and gasp for air, we needed to continue running, but on the spot. Eventually, we reached the shooting range. Totally exhausted and demoralised, some guys collapsed in tears. Our instructor gave us a thirty-minute break before teaching us a drill formation used in bush warfare called "*Loop en val*." We would stand in a straight line, shoulder to shoulder, facing the same direction. At the given command, we would drop to one knee with our firearms on our shoulders, pointing in front of us. From the left, members one, three, five and so on would run forward, leaving members two, four, six and so on behind them. When they had run about fifty meters, the members would fall to the ground on their stomachs and start a rapid fire. The members that were left behind would then stand and run about one hundred meters, past the members who were firing live ammunition. They, too, would fall to the ground and fire rapid, live ammunition and the members behind them would then run past them with live rounds being fired between them. This exercise would continue for about two kilometres before we were called back and handed another one hundred rounds of ammunition. The exercise would be repeated. At about midday, we placed our pole on our shoulder and undertook the ten-kilometre run back to base.

The following day we ran in a different direction for about five kilometres until we arrived at an obstacle course. We needed to make our way over a wooden structure that stood about three meters high. A rope was placed over a gorge, and we needed to use the rope to get to the other side, sliding on our bellies with our feet over the rope for balance. The only way to propel forward was to use our arms and brute force. Until midday, we completed a variety of obstacles. We used our "*varkpan*" and ate a one-meal rat pack for lunch. After lunch, we were instructed to complete the obstacle course again, and we needed to crawl under barbed wire that was about a foot off the ground. Our instructor told us that we needed to keep our heads down as he would be firing live ammunition over the wire with an LMG (Light Machine Gun).

During our last week in training, we ran, in formation, to the helipad. Our instructor told us that we would fly in the helicopter to an unknown destination. The helicopter would come down to five meters from the ground. The co-pilot would

give us the instruction to jump. As soon as the first person had jumped, the helicopter would start to ascend, leaving the last to jump the highest before the helicopter headed back to base. We were required to find our way back to the base using a compass. With full kit and our rifles, we got into the helicopter. A scuffle broke out as the guys wanted to sit close to the doors on either side of the helicopter. Butterflies ran amok in my stomach. This was my first time in a helicopter, and I had to jump from at least five meters from the ground. Soon I felt the wind against my face as the helicopter picked up speed. About fifteen minutes later, we felt the helicopter slow down as it hovered above a clearing. The pilot managed to bring the helicopter to about five meters above the ground before the co-pilot signalled for us to disembark. The guys nearest the doors looked down at the ground and hesitated nervously before taking the plunge. I was the third on the right. I wanted to wet my pants as I looked down and saw the guys landing on the ground and performing a roll with their knees slightly bent. I said a silent prayer and jumped. I hit the ground hard and felt all air being forced out of my lungs as I rolled. Soon the helicopter was out of sight, leaving us to fend for ourselves.

Before leaving the base camp, we were handed a compass and map. I briefly studied the map and wished I had paid more attention during the geography lessons regarding maps and contours. We huddled around the map and compass and tried to make sense of it all. We agreed to head in a north, north easterly direction through rugged bushveld until we came across a small dam indicated on the map. We estimated that the dam was about twenty kilometres away, and we would spend the night there. We should reach the dam around 18:00 before dark. The only Lance sergeant amongst us was nominated to lead with the map and compass.

Surrounding this clearing was dense bush consisting mainly of thorn trees. Our newly appointed leader looked down at the compass and started to walk. We walked in single file behind him, everyone looking from side to side, anticipating an ambush from our instructors. Progress was slow as we fought our way through the thick vegetation. Thorns between four and six inches long pierced our skin, and often, a thin branch would flick past our face, causing the thorns to cut our cheeks. As much as

we wanted to shriek out in pain, we knew that we needed to remain silent at all times, only communicating with hand signals.

We appeared to have gone through the worst when we needed to ascent towards a ravine about a kilometre away. Some guys were limping after the leap from the helicopter, whilst others started to show signs of dehydration and exhaustion. We sat on rocks at the top, admiring the view. We took this time to open the ration pack and dilute the energy, *naartjie* flavoured drink in the cylindrical plastic bag provided. We gulped the drink and ate the small energy bar. After about a half-hour break, we gathered our backpacks and firearms and made our way down the hill. Often loose shale rock would slide from under our feet and cause us to stumble backwards. We walked in single file until we reached a river. The water gushed past, causing rapids and white water. We needed to wade our way through the water with our firearms above our heads. We crossed the chest-high water and made our way through the mud on the embankment. The sun was right above us, and the dry Highveld air burned as we inhaled. We walked through the waist-high yellow grass and thorn trees until the sun started to set in front of us. We agreed to rest just before dark but continued to walk in single file.

Suddenly automatic gun fire came from a thicket to our right. We dived to the ground and returned fire. We could not see anyone, but we fired in the direction where the gunfire came from. Fortunately, this was a training exercise, and our ammunition were blanks. Our instructors later emerged from the bush. All were camouflaged with black stripes across their face and yellow grass in their headwear. “You are all dead,” one of the instructors yelled out. “You were walking too close together, and none of you were paying attention in anticipation of an attack. Do you think this is a bloody holiday camp? Fall in!” We hurriedly took up our positions in file and soon heard the command “*Voorwaarts”* (Forward). We spent the next two hours running back to base. We had clearly missed dinner as it was already 20:00 hours. Hungry and tired, we fell asleep.

My station commander saw something in me. He took a liking to me, and within the first six months, he gave me command of six uniformed officers and a vehicle to perform crime prevention duties in the town. Soon we were feared by many. Hawkers were

arrested and their fruit confiscated, which we later shared among the officers. Motorists were fined for failing to come to a full stop at a stop sign, and I fined drivers for every traffic violation possible. We removed vagrants who slept in town and took them to a faraway place, where we would leave them in the ice of winter, with just a thin blanket. We were cleaning up the town and restoring order. I also decided that driving under the influence should come to an end, and I needed to clamp down on offenders. I would park our vehicle near the local country club and arrest the drivers for driving under the influence as they exited the premises. One night I arrested the town mayor for driving under the influence, took him to the local hospital for a blood test and detained him in the police dells. My station commander encouraged these arrests, especially the arrests for minor offences, as he noted a decrease in serious crimes, but he wasn't very impressed with me when I arrested the mayor.

One day I had to drive to Pietermaritzburg to take a member to the train station as he was to be deployed to the border for six weeks. On my arrival back at the station, I was told that my team had arrested a suspected shoplifter and had `tubed'[6] him in our office. The suspect suffocated and died. Three of my members were charged with murder and suspended from work without pay. I was relieved that I was not there at the time, or I would also, in all likelihood, have been involved.

I had completed a gruelling border training course, which lasted two months, so whenever the opportunity arose to go to the border for six weeks, I volunteered. Not because I enjoyed my time patrolling the border on foot or spending the evenings drinking with the boys, or the excitement and thrill of ambushes we had set up for terrorists, and the countless number of people we had killed, but it was for the money. The danger allowance was good, and it was tax-free as we worked in a neighbouring country. Also, living expenses were minimal as all food and alcohol were supplied.

[6] A tyre tube is pulled around the suspect's face, suffocating them. Just before the point of death, the tube was removed from his face, leaving the suspect gulping and gasping for air.

I volunteered for border duties on the South West Africa/ Angola border. This was the most dangerous border because we had to contend with soldiers from SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organisation) under the leadership of Sam Njoma, who were fighting for independence from South Africa. In 1990, South West Africa, which was part of South Africa, became independent and was renamed Namibia. We were also fighting the military wing of the ANC (*uMkhonto weSizwe*) under the leadership of Terror Lekota, and others. They would use Angola as a gateway into South West Africa and into South Africa, to perform acts of terror to overthrow the Nationalist government of the time.

I caught a train to Pretoria and was flown, from Waterkloof military airport in a "*Flossie*" to Windhoek in South West Africa together with about ten other young constables who were also assigned to Katima Mulilo, a military and border police base in South West Africa on the Angolan border. On our arrival by Casspir at the base, we were divided into existing platoons, who had been performing border duties for some time. This was a base for police members only, and the army base was some distance away. Some police members had been stationed there for many years and were considered to be permanent border staff known as KOEVOET. All these members wore beards and were hardened men. They had witnessed a lot of killing in their time there and had also lost many colleagues in this bush war. They had a very bad attitude which set them apart from other policemen. These "*Oumanne*," as they were called, were heavy drinkers who didn't know and didn't care about what happened in the outside world. Their world was the bush and this war, and that's all they lived for. They were single, as many had lost their wives, who became impatient and moved on. Many could not be rehabilitated back into society after the 1994 general elections and found themselves being medically boarded with PTSD and depression. Many could not cope with the daily stresses of policing and ended up committing suicide within the first six months of working at station level.

On my second day, while the "Oumanne" were drinking brandy and coke and lazing around without their shirts on, the sergeant called us all to the parade ground. He told us that they had just received information from the Army Intelligence that a group of about fifteen terrorists was hiding out at a nearby

village. The coordinates were handed to the platoon sergeant, and we made our way to the Casspir, an armed troop-carrying vehicle used in bush and township warfare. The Casspir was a cylindrical shaped vehicle, where troops would enter in the back and below each window, on either side of the vehicle, was a seat with a spring-loaded port hole below it. The rifle would protrude through the port hole opposite the seat to take fire. In front of the vehicle were two seats. One was for the driver and one for his crew, who would operate the light machine gun, which was mounted to the roof of the vehicle. We drove on a dusty sand road for about an hour when the sergeant, who was in the passenger seat, commanded us to get ready. We placed our rifles through the porthole on the opposite side to where we sat and waited as we approached our target.

Within minutes we heard the command, “Fire!” As the village came into sight. We placed our rifles on automatic fire and started to shoot at this village. The light machine gun caused the most damage. We shot at everything in sight. There was a massive cloud of dust, and chicken feathers flew in the air. Donkeys lay dead. Women and children came running from their mud homes, screaming in fear before being mowed down by a hail of automatic fire. The hail of bullets flattened entire buildings. Dogs barked, but only momentarily before they were also mowed down. Sheep and goats scattered in different directions at the sound of gunfire, but not even they could escape the onslaught. Within minutes, everything went quiet under a cloud of dust. Our sergeant was satisfied that everyone and everything was dead and that the village had been totally destroyed. The command “Debus” followed as the rear of the Casspir opened. We quickly and systematically exited the vehicle before going on our haunches with our firearms pointed at the village. Once our sergeant alighted from the vehicle, he used the hand signal to move us forward towards the village. The sergeant and the first two members walked slowly forward with their firearms pointed towards the village while the rest followed. Members four, six and eight pointed their firearms to the left and members five, seven and nine pointed their firearms to the right as we continued towards the wrecked village. All structures were made of mud and thatch roofs. In what resembled the kitchen, three females and five girl children lay dead in thick smoke from

a fire in the centre used to cook. All sustained multiple gunshot wounds. Our high-velocity rifles were designed to cause maximum devastation. We moved to the adjacent building, often stepping over a dead animal. Inside lay three old men, four young boys and six teenagers. The teenagers were clutching their AK-47 rifles, and they sustained the most gunshot wounds. We suspected that they had tried to defend the village but died without being able to fire a single shot. In an adjacent room lay another three young males. All were covered in blood. Their bullet-riddled bodies scattered on the floor. The stench of fresh blood filled the air. A total of twenty-two suspected terrorists died that day, and it felt good. We casually headed back to the Casspir where the driver waited for us. Our sergeant ordered the driver to return to base. The cabin in which we were seated was so full of gunfire smoke that our sergeant let us travel back to base with the back door open. On our arrival back at our base, we were greeted like heroes. Those who remained behind clapped their hands as we walked towards our tents, covered in dust. The sergeants poured stiff Brandies and Coke, and within minutes, they were chatting and laughing as if nothing had happened.

A few days later, we were again called to the parade ground. Our sergeant informed us that army intelligence had received information of a large group of terrorists hiding out in the mountains about fifty kilometres northeast of where we were. The information was that they had at least twenty women with them who they used for sex and who would prepare food for them. They also had at least ten boys with them who they were training to be soldiers.

A helicopter was to take us to within five kilometres o where they were hiding, and we would proceed on foot the rest of the way. This operation would take place under cover of night. These men were heavily armed, and we had to be prepared for a battle. The time of departure was 02:00 hours. He advised that we get some sleep as he needed us to be ready for any eventuality. At 01:30, we gathered on the parade ground in full kit. We did a final check of our equipment before heading toward the helicopter. We climbed into the helicopter at one fifty-five. The rotor blades were already on by that time as the engines were warming up. At exactly 02:00, the helicopter rose from the

ground. My group consisted of ten young constables and our platoon sergeant. We flew for about fifteen minutes when the helicopter slowed down and started to hover. It then came down slowly and stopped about fifty meters from ground level. Our sergeant ordered us out of the helicopter by shouting `debus', and one by one, we had to jump. As we landed on the ground, we were trained to scurry into a bush for shelter and provide cover for the helicopter until the helicopter rose again and flew back to base. Only once the helicopter was out of sight could we reassemble, and our sergeant did a quick head count to ensure all were present. We would get into a V formation and start our walk stealthily towards our target. When we were close but still out of sight, our sergeant gave the hand signal for us to stop by raising a clenched fist. We automatically crouched down as we stopped but kept our focus on what lay ahead. We were equipped with night vision goggles and could see the cave[7] against the mountain ahead of us. Our sergeant signalled for us to move slowly forward, which we did with our rifles pointed at our target. We crept slowly toward our target and when we were near the entrance to the cave, our sergeant stopped us again. He used a hand signal indicating that we would be utilising grenades in this operation. We were all in possession of phosphorus grenades, which we used in house penetration exercises and were often preferred during a night ops. Phosphorus lit up the night sky and the bright light would temporarily blind the target. Also, when it comes into contact with skin, it burns and doesn't stop burning. It can burn a hole right through a person's body. We crouched and waited for the command from our sergeant.

Suddenly, in the dark of night, he shouted; "Grenade," and we simultaneously threw our grenades into the cave. The entire cave lit up from the phosphorous, and people came running out, burning and screaming in pain. Their clothes were on fire, and we could smell burning flesh as they came running out. We opened fire on them whilst there was enough light to see them. No one was spared. Our persistent automatic gunfire mowed down all the men, women and boys.

[7] A mountain with a substantial cave on the South West African border with Angola. Where? Koakaveld?

Once the gunfire, smoke, and light from the phosphorous had subsided, we walked slowly towards the entrance of the cave with our rifles pointed in front of us. Our sergeant entered the cave first. We noticed that they must have been hiding out here for a while, as they were well-equipped with pots and cooking utensils. Near the back of the cave, our sergeant noticed what he thought was a pile of blankets. He carefully walked closer to it and noticed a boy huddled in the corner.

This boy couldn't be more than twelve years old. His big brown eyes stared in fear at us. Our sergeant grabbed the boy by the scruff of his tatty shirt and pulled him up. Underneath the boy, he noticed an AK47 automatic machine gun. He placed cable ties around the boy's wrists behind his back and ordered him out of the cave with a push from behind. Once we were sure the area had been secured and that everyone was dead, our sergeant commanded us to report to the area where the helicopter had dropped us off earlier. We walked in formation, but this time, the sergeant walked at the back with the boy.

We radioed to the helicopter to fetch us at the rendezvous and walked to a clearing. Whilst we were walking, we suddenly heard a loud shot behind us, and everyone went into the crouch position and looked back, each with their firearm pointed in a different direction to give all-round cover. In the still of the night, we heard our sergeant command, "Forward." We rose and continued walking in formation to the rendezvous point. No one looked back, but we knew what had just happened. The helicopter arrived at the rendezvous and airlifted us back to base camp. I decided to join the others, and I poured myself a stiff drink.

A week later, our sergeant called us again to the parade ground. He informed us that the army intelligence had come with information that a group of at least six terrorists would be heading for South West Africa on foot from a small village just inside Angola. Our sergeant examined a map of the area, which indicated contour lines, gravel roads and dams. He pointed out the path the terrorists would use and the direction they would take. He noticed that this was a barren area and that it would be a challenge to find an ideal place to set up an ambush, but he pointed out a small dam near the suspected path the terrorists were to use. He hoped that this dam had dried up and we could

hide ourselves on the embankment of the dam. An embankment provided ideal cover in an ambush situation. He ordered that we would leave on foot at 02:00 hours. The use of vehicles to transport us could result in us being ambushed or the target being made aware of our presence, nullifying our intentions of the element of surprise. This was a perfect ambush, and there was nowhere they could hide, we had the advantage point of the dam embankment, which we could use as cover.

At 01:30, we reassembled on the parade ground with full kit, consisting of our R1 rifle, yolk, ammo pouches, backpack, water bottle and a one-meal ration pack. We left the base on foot, and the nervous tension was almost tangible. Nobody said a word as we marched forward into the night. The sky to the east had changed colour since we left the base, and we knew that within two hours, the sun would peek its head out at a distance. Not leaving us much time to find suitable cover before sunrise.

Our sergeant started to pick up the pace to a brisk walk suddenly, but not quite a jog. Finally, our sergeant raised his fist, and we came to a standstill and crouched where we were. Our sergeant removed a compass from a pocket on his yolk and examined it briefly. Obviously, still satisfied with our progress, he waved to us to continue on our journey. After walking in silence for another hour, our sergeant held up his fist again. We stopped and went into a crouching position again. He signalled to us to look in the direction he was pointing by pointing two fingers at his eyes and then the direction in which we should look. About seventy-five meters ahead and to the right, we noticed the banks of a small dam, but the dam was too far for us to see whether or not it was dry. I looked to my left and my right for another possible and suitable place to lay an ambush, but there was none.

The dry thorn trees were far apart, and the yellow grass was only about knee height, making the dam embankment the most suitable area in which to lay an ambush. As we approached the dam, we noticed that it was about half full of water, so we needed to submerge ourselves in the water out of sight from the terrorists and wild animals who would drink at this dam. The water was cold but felt refreshing after the long walk. Our kit became heavy as we submerged ourselves below the water level. The sun rose in the east, and our surroundings became more visible.

The terrorists could walk past us at any time, so everyone remained motionless in the water. The sun beat down on us and then set in the west, but still no terrorists. By the third day in the water, we started to wonder how accurate the information was, and some guys started to get restless as their muscles started to cramp in the cold water. A stern look from our sergeant brought discipline back to the platoon, and everyone remained still. Quietly and without much commotion, we caught little fish and tadpoles and ate them raw. We had to crap in the water, and all accepted that there was no other choice.

The sun had just peeped over the hills when suddenly, we saw a group of heavily armed men walking on the path near us. This group walked briskly in a south-easterly direction. Our sergeant shouted; “Fire!” We tried to get to our feet, but our muscles wouldn’t work, so we had to crawl quickly up the embankment and take fire. All rifles were on automatic, and within seconds all ten terrorists lay dead on the ground. My sergeant called for an evacuation as he realised we were not able to walk back to our base. Within minutes a helicopter arrived where we were. The medics helped us up and assisted us in walking to the helicopter, where we were taken back to base and treated for diarrhoea, dehydration, sunstroke, muscle pains and rotten feet and hands. Our base commander placed us on special leave for a week to recover, and a few days later, we were transferred back to our stations. That was the last time I volunteered for border duties. It wasn’t worth the money.

My station commander noticed I had matured and had become a diligent, hardworking and obedient cop, in my first two years of service. He was mistaken; I had not grown up; I was an angry person and had a lot of resentment towards others, especially blacks and criminals, but he thought I had matured to become a stern and good policeman. He also recognised my dedication, commitment and unusual, if not unorthodox, manner of investigation, so I was offered a position in the Detective Branch. This was unheard of as it was mandatory to serve at least four years in the uniform branch before one was even considered to become a detective. I was overjoyed at this opportunity. I studied and was promoted to sergeant; I had also completed my two years at the rank of constable, so I qualified for promotion. I had

experienced a lot in my short time in the service and was nominated to attend an introductory detective course, long before my time. I was determined to solve every case that needed to be investigated, and I didn't care at what cost. Criminals needed to go to jail, and I was the one who would put them there.

One day, a local farmer walked into my office and complained that he had a problem with theft on his farm, and he suspected that his workers were stealing from him. He complained that he had lost five chickens due to theft. He looked at me not only for assistance in finding the culprit but also because I was the one he could count on. He explained that some of his labourers lived in huts on his farm, and he suspected them of stealing the chickens. That night I went to the huts he had told me about. I searched the area around the open fire and found a few feathers. I questioned the occupants of the hut about the feathers, and they said that they had recently bought a chicken, which they had slaughtered. I accused them of lying and told them that there would be consequences if they didn't tell me the truth. They looked at each other for answers, but denied any knowledge of the stolen chickens. One labourer had a son, maybe ten years old. I grabbed him by the front of his shirt and told him to tell me the truth. He stared at me with fear in his eyes but kept saying he didn't know. I took a rope I had in my vehicle, threw it across the horizontal support beam in the hut, and tied it around his neck. The boy started to pull at the rope, trying to get free. He was shouting and crying by that time, and his parents watched in horror as I pulled the young boy off his feet. The woman started to shout that I should let the boy go, and the men said that they were not going to accept what I was doing to the boy, and that they would go and lay a charge of assault against me at the police station, but I ignored their threats and continued to pull until the boy's feet were off the ground. I noticed he was pulling at the rope around his neck, trying to free himself, but I kept the pressure on. The boy's eyes started to fall backwards in his skull, and his body became limp. One woman shouted that I was killing her child and that I should stop. She promised to tell me the truth, but I held the rope tight, telling her that she must talk first and very quickly because the boy was dying. Quickly, she told me that she and her friend had stolen the chickens and that they had

eaten them. I released the boy, who was gasping for breath. He dropped to his knees rubbing his neck, sobbing uncontrollably. I took the two girls to the farmer, and they confessed to stealing the chickens and said that they had cooked the chickens.

With being a detective at such an early age came arrogance and attitude. I would employ any method imaginable to extract the truth. I placed a suspect in an enclosed vehicle and gave him the "hot and cold treatment." I would park the vehicle near a tap and drench him with ice-cold water. He would then accompany me on a twenty-kilometre journey until I reached a deserted area. The suspect would shiver from being cold, and I would spray him with tear gas, causing him to shout in pain as the tear gas burned his skin. I would casually undertake the journey back to the station. If, for whatever reason, the suspect was reluctant to talk, I would repeat the exercise. More often than not, a suspect would break down and confess.

Another favourite method that I was proud of inventing was the marathon. I would travel to a deserted area, preferably on a gravel road and tie a rope around his wrists and to the back of my vehicle, leaving about five meters between the suspect and the vehicle. I would drive slowly, leaving the suspect to run behind the vehicle. I listened to music and casually smoked a cigarette as I drove along the gravel road, leaving the suspect to run behind the vehicle. I knew it was just a matter of time before he would gasp for breath and shout for me to stop. If the suspect collapsed whilst I drove, I would drag him over the stones for about one hundred meters before lifting him to his feet. Normally, suspects only collapsed once. Being dragged over stones was more painful than running, but I did whatever I needed to do to extract the truth. I knew that one day I would be catapulted to a specialised branch.

Lizzie was a buxom blond in her mid-twenties. Everyone in this town knew Lizzie. She made no bones about her lustful desires towards men in uniform, and the younger cops were often lured into her bedroom, which was an extension of the house onto the veranda of one of the older houses in the town. This residence was situated on the main street, which was also the busiest street in this town. Lizzie had been divorced for two years, and the reasons for the divorce from a wealthy businessman were quite

sketchy. Lizzie would frequent the “Ladies’ Bar” in the Royal Hotel in search of an unsuspecting `victim’.

The cooking facilities at the barracks were limited to a two-plate stove, a kettle and a toaster, which made cooking a meal virtually impossible. My friend and I had an arrangement to enjoy dinner at the Royal Hotel and arranged that these meals would be paid for at the end of the month.

One evening, we were enjoying dinner when Lizzie made a grand entrance in a striking red dress. She walked past us in the dining room and flicked her blond hair to the side in an attempt to draw our attention. We stopped chewing for a while and watched as she disappeared into the “Ladies' Bar”. After dinner, I suggested we have a quick drink before my shift commenced at 22:00, so we went into the Ladies’ Bar. As we walked towards the bar, we noticed Lizzie flirting with Gary, who was a uniformed cop and married to an oversized woman who was employed as a clerk at the magistrate’s court. We didn’t take much notice as my shift would start in forty-five minutes, and we were expected to report for duty at least thirty minutes before our shift time. We ordered a drink and sat behind the bar counter, awaiting our drink. We knew what Gary was doing was wrong, but we pitied him because he was married to a woman twice his size, so it was better to turn a blind eye. I took a sip of my beer and noticed, out of the corner of my eye, that Lizzie stood up and straightened her dress. She smiled and walked towards us, waving her cigarette in the air. I felt a sudden shiver and goosebumps down my back as she placed her hand on my shoulder. Her face was next to mine, and her musky perfume filled the air. She whispered in my ear that I should come to her place for a “cup of coffee”. I knew what she meant and politely declined her offer.

An hour later, I was patrolling the town in a yellow police van. I turned onto Main Road and suddenly heard a loud explosion. Dogs started to bark, and houses that were in the dark suddenly came to life as lights were switched on. In the distance, I noticed a figure of a person covered in flames. He was trying to bring the flames under control whilst stumbling forward. I raced towards this person, and as I approached him, I recognised Gary’s voice crying out for help. I removed my grey coat, known as a “*warm jas*,” and used this coat to extinguish the flames. I heard the voice of my crew on the radio calling for an ambulance.

Lizzie's room was ablaze. I needed to save her, so I rushed towards her room. As I entered the premises, another explosion lit up the evening sky. The force of the explosion was so intense that I was forced backwards and felt myself falling on the sidewalk in front of the house. There was no fire brigade, and it was expected that members of the police, with the help of local farmers, would deal with fires. An ambulance arrived shortly thereafter, and Gary was taken to hospital. I waited and watched as the house became engulfed in flames. The heat emanating from the fire made it impossible to enter the house. Within thirty minutes, five farmers were on site with water carts to douse the flames. Two hours had passed before the flames were under control, and I was able to enter the house. The smouldering timber made visibility difficult as my torch rays were deflected and couldn't penetrate the thick, toxic smoke. Lizzie's body was only recovered the following day. I was shocked to see that her charred body was half its former size. Her body lay on her stomach near the only door to her room. I gathered that she was trying to escape at the time of the explosion. Fortunately, I thought, she did not suffer much before being engulfed by the flames. There was not much I could do on this crime scene before the detectives arrived. I recalled over and over how our last encounter at the Royal Hotel unfolded and how fortunate I was not to be the one who went home with her the night before.

Once the detectives arrived at the scene, I was relieved of my duties. I decided to go to the hospital to pay Gary a visit. It was not visiting hours, but news spread quickly about the explosion, and I was permitted to see Gary. I walked down the icy cold corridor, glancing at the room numbers. Finally, I arrived at the ward where Gary lay on his back and covered in bandages. Gary's wife stood by his side. Both her hands covered her face as she sobbed uncontrollably. This was not an appropriate time to pay a visit, so I turned around and hurried out of the hospital.

This explosion was the talk of the town for weeks to come. People gossiped about this explosion, and many women were of the opinion that Gary got what he deserved. His infidelity was frowned upon by all women, especially those who were married.

I heard from the detective investigating this matter that Gary and Lizzie were in bed when suddenly the lights went off. Gary heard the click of a circuit breaker as the lights went off. He

did not know where the distribution board was situated, so he struck a match to create a little light. Little did he know that one of the gas bottles on the two-plate stove was leaking. He was walking towards the distribution board when suddenly the gas bottle exploded. The force of the explosion blew him out of the room. Gary tried to rescue Lizzie, but he also needed to douse the flames on his body. He realised that he was not able to rescue Lizzie so he decided to save himself. Gary explained that a short while later he heard a second explosion, as another gas bottle exploded.

Another farmer came to see me about five heifers that were stolen on his farm. He didn't suspect anybody in particular, but he suspected that cattle had been stolen and herded over the border into Lesotho. I drove to his farm and made enquiries amongst the local employees, but as usual, no one had any idea about the stolen heifers. I took one of the herd boys and removed my rope from behind the seat of my van. I tied his hands together in front of his body and tried the other end to the back of my van. I drove off slowly until there was no slack on the rope. I drove along the gravel road with the boy running behind the van. After a few kilometres, he was exhausted and fell to the ground. I continued to drive, dragging him behind me over stones on the gravel road. I then stopped by the van and asked him if he wanted to say anything, but he shook his head, so I continued to drive along the gravel road with him running behind my van. He fell to the ground again, and again I dragged him until I stopped and asked him if he had anything to say, and he shook his head again. I climbed back into my van and drove off again, with him running behind the van. By this time, this boy was totally exhausted and on the verge of having a heart attack. I realised that he really didn't know anything, so I let him go. The same farmer came to my office about a year later and thanked me. He had not had so much as a chicken stolen from his farm since I was there. My station commander also commended me for all my efforts in curbing crime in the area and told me that stock theft was down by 45%.

A year later, I was promoted to Detective Branch commander. By that time, I had married a pretty young lady who thought the

world of me. She was so proud of me and so proud of who I had become. She knew that some people loved and admired me, and some despised and feared me, but she didn't care what people thought of me. She loved me. She had given birth to our son, Tony, and I soon realised that this small town was not the ideal place to raise a child. We wanted our son to grow up in a big town, where he could have a good education and have more opportunities, and I realised I had to work hard to get noticed and be accepted into a specialised unit at such a young age.

As branch commander, I was also responsible for investigating murder cases. The more serious murder cases and those that drew a lot of media attention were automatically assigned to the Murder and Robbery Unit.

Late on a Saturday afternoon, I was standing around the braai fire enjoying a beer when I heard my telephone ring. My wife was attending to the baby, so I decided to abandon what I was doing and answer it. I immediately recognised the voice on the other end as Constable Zulu from the charge office. "Sorry to worry you, Sir. We have just received a report that Mr Du Preez has been murdered at his Zizabantu store. I have already despatched the patrol van to the crime scene." A shiver ran down my spine as I realised that this was going to be my first "white murder" crime scene. Suddenly, a thousand thoughts rushed through my mind as I tried to remember all I had been taught regarding crime scene investigation. I knew that I better not mess this up as it would have devastating consequences on my career as a detective in a specialised branch, and I would, in all likelihood, spend my entire career in this small town if I did cock it up.

With a beer between my legs, I drove to the murder scene. I thought of the first time I had met Mr Du Preez at the monthly farmers' meeting held in the town hall. I recall meeting an elderly man, possibly in his late sixties. He was well-spoken with a soft voice, and he was in no way intimidating. His grey hair and beard were well groomed, and he was dressed in a pair of corduroy trousers and a matching button-up shirt. I learned that Mr Du Preez's wife had passed away due to cancer about two years before, and his two sons, who were raising their own families, had emigrated and were living in England. As I mingled with other farmers from the area, I learned that Mr Du Preez was very well-

liked by the black folk in the area. He always tried to help them and even allowed pensioners to buy on credit and pay him on pension day. On a Saturday, he would set up a television set on his store's veranda and allow boys to watch a soccer match before closing. He lived alone in a house built in the sixties adjacent to his General Dealer store.

I wondered why and who could have killed such a likeable person. I took another sip of my beer and thought of the geography of this area. A main road went straight through the town, which divided the farming community. On the one side, a tar road existed between this town and the neighbouring town. The farmers on that side travelled on tarred roads to their farms. They were mainly sugarcane farmers, although some planted cabbage, tomatoes and potatoes. These farmers drove a new Mercedes every year, lived in beautiful double-storey homes and sent their children to private schools in the city. On the other side, the side I was travelling on, a gravel road meandered between this town and a neighbouring town to the north. The farmers stayed in old, rather run-down farmhouses and drove old bakkies, which they had to maintain as they couldn't afford to buy new ones. These were cattle and sheep farmers who were plagued with stock theft. The black community were poor and relied on social grants and theft to survive.

The contrast between these two groups of farmers, largely divided by a main road, was astounding.

I travelled along an unmaintained gravel road until I reached Sizabantu Store in the hills about thirty kilometres from town. Upon arrival, I noticed a uniformed policeman interviewing two visibly distraught females. They were seated in the shade of a big tree near the entrance of the general dealer. As I approached the entrance of the shop, I noticed Mr Du Preez lying on his back in a pool of blood on a covered veranda. A television set, which was on, was set on a table at the end of the veranda. I approached the body stealthily, examining the scene for any evidence. Before reaching the body, I noticed a spent cartridge at a distance of about two meters from his head lying on the veranda floor. The shop's front door was open, and I was certain the perpetrators were long gone. I examined the body and realised that Mr Du Preez had been shot once in the right temple. There appeared to be a sign of a struggle as his shirt was torn. I

walked into the shop, which was sparsely lit with burglar-guarded windows high up near the ceiling on one side of the shop. Halfway into the shop, a counter stretched from one side to the other with the merchandise at the back of the counter. Thick steel mesh wire was welded on top of the counter, and a serving hatch was on one side. A steel gate was situated at one side of the counter, which was unlocked and ajar. I walked behind the counter and noticed the open and empty till drawer.

The constable had concluded his interview with the two women and reported that they were employed by the deceased. One worked in the shop, and the other in his home. He explained to me that both ladies lived in the same area, and after work, the lady who worked in the house walked towards the shop to meet her friend. Before she approached the shop, she heard a gunshot going off. As she looked towards the shop, she saw the deceased lying on his back, and the front door was open. Her friend, waiting for her under the tree, ran towards her in fright. When the two ladies were together, they noticed two young black males running out of the shop. The taller of the two had a firearm in his right hand and a plastic bag in his left. They gave me a brief description of the two boys and said they had seen them before watching soccer on the television set, but both were unknown to them.

I carefully collected the cartridge and placed it in a plastic evidence bag, which I labelled. I thoroughly photographed the crime scene and requested the constable place the television set in the store. I locked the store and instructed the constable to guard the deceased until the mortuary van arrived. I had work to do. I had to find these two boys. I realised that if I solved this murder, it would put me on the map to greater things. I would instantly receive recognition from my superiors, who might even consider transferring me to a specialised murder investigation unit. I also knew that time was not on my side. If I did not make a breakthrough soon, the case would be transferred to a more experienced Murder and Robbery detective. I had become the branch commander of the detective branch before completing the mandatory four years in the uniform branch, so it was possible, even slightly possible, that I could serve in a specialised unit. It all rested on this case, and I had to seize the opportunity.

I drove to a nearby homestead and wanted to interview the locals about these two boys. Maybe somebody knew or saw something. This information would be invaluable at such an early stage of the investigation. When I arrived at the homestead, I found about ten males dancing to traditional music in front of the huts. The speakers, which were placed outside the hut, played distorted music as the speakers sounded blown from playing the music too loud. This did not deter these guys as they danced, holding a quart of beer in their hands. They glanced at me briefly as I pulled my vehicle off the cattle path that lead to the homestead. My presence was not going to distract them from having fun, and they continued to enjoy their party. Realising that my visit would be futile, I decided to abandon my quest to interview them. Poverty in the area was rife, and the community at large was hostile towards the police. We were seen as a hindrance to their fight for survival. The close-knit community also very seldom volunteered information out of fear of reprisal or being alienated.

As I returned to my office, I passed Mr Gouws Venter's farm. I recalled how last week he told me that a pregnant cow had been killed in a paddock where she had been grazing in the shade of tall blue gum trees. He was so distraught when he explained that her abdomen had been cut open, leaving the unborn calf to die next to its mother, that it brought a tear to his eyes. This was an attack of pure vengeance, as no limbs had been removed from the mother. He explained that he was experiencing tough economic times and had no option but to dismiss three farm labourers. He suspects their involvement in this heinous, senseless killing but couldn't prove it. Mr Venter told me that he had been on this farm for thirty years and that the past year had been his worst. He felt victimised and was at the point of giving it up. Similar attacks were experienced by surrounding farmers, who would lose livestock every week, either to theft or vandalism. Growing sentiment amongst these farmers was that they were being forced off their farms.

On my arrival at my office, I had to strategise and plan how to obtain information about these two perpetrators. I soon realisation that the only way to obtain information would be to offer a financial reward. Even though this was a close community, as most of them were related in some way, they were extremely

poor. Most women in the homesteads tried to grow vegetables, but due to the hot, dry conditions, most of their efforts were in vain. Many homesteads relied on the grandmothers' meagre government grant to survive. Often, grandmothers lost their husbands and sons, and they were left with the responsibility of raising the offspring. I mandated my detectives to offer five thousand Rand for information that would lead to the arrest of these perpetrators. I was sure that financial assistance, in such an impoverished community would be greatly appreciated. I gathered my detectives and told them that I had authorised a reward of five thousand rand to anyone with information regarding these two suspects. My detectives left me in my office to register and write up the docket.

Early that evening, I heard one of my vehicles stop in front of my house. Sergeant Mkhize, who was one of my more experienced and dedicated detectives, climbed out of the vehicle and walked to my house. With a broad smile, he told me that his grandmother had given him information about the two boys and that he had identified where they lived. He told me that the two brothers, both in their early twenties, were unemployed. They lived in a room adjacent to their parents' home, and because they were unemployed, they did what most unemployed youths did during the day, which was hanging out with friends and girlfriends, and would only return to their rooms late at night. I suggested that we should arrest them in the early hours of the morning. I asked Sergeant Mkhize to tell the other detectives that we would meet at my office at three in the morning, but he was not to give any information about our operation.

As planned, I met my detectives at my office at three o'clock. I briefed them about our intended operation and armed each detective with an R5 rifle. We set out in four vehicles to arrest the suspects.

Sergeant Mkhize led the way. We drove past Sizabantu Store, and about a kilometre further, we turned off the main road and travelled along an ill-maintained gravel road, just wide enough to accommodate a vehicle. Before coming to a stop, we switched our headlights off. My eyes took several moments to adjust to the pitch darkness. The only light was from the millions of stars in the clear night sky. In the distance, we heard a dog bark. We followed Sergeant Mkhize, barely making out his figure

in the darkness until we could vaguely see the homestead in the distance. The isolated homestead was situated at the bottom of a hill, and the closer we came to the homestead, the stronger the pungent smell of cattle manure became. When we arrived at the homestead, it became evident the property was fenced and that the best way to gain access would be to climb over a farm gate. As we walked quietly towards the room addition, a dog tied to a chain started to bark. We realised that this dog would alert the occupants, so we ran towards the room and kicked the door in. The two brothers, who shared a bed, were startled at the sudden sound, and both sat up in bed, exposing their naked upper bodies. Both had clearly been drinking and smoking dagga[8] the night before, as it took them several moments to come to the realisation that we were the police. They suddenly jumped out of bed, but by that time, there was no chance of escape, and they were in the grip of my detectives. We conducted a quick search of the room for the firearm, but found nothing. Both started to object to our presence and started to shout loudly, hoping to attract attention. A slap across the face from Sergeant Mkhize was all it took to shut them up. Realising that the situation might become volatile, we decided to escort the two boys off the premises as quickly as possible. The suspects were handcuffed and escorted out of their room.

When we arrived at the farm gate, I instructed my detectives to remain with the two suspects, and I would climb the fence first, upon which I would receive the suspects on the other side. As my feet touched the ground on the other side, I noticed one suspect break free from the grips of the detectives, and he ran down the property on the inside. I gave chase but realised that I would not be able to apprehend him as we had a fence that separated us. I drew my 9mm pistol and fired at the suspect, whilst running alongside him. My body was twisting to face him as I fired my first shot, which echoed through the surrounding hills and valleys, and I missed. I fired again and noticed the boy fall to the ground in a painful roar. Another detective who had run after him inside the property eventually caught up to the boy and called out to me that he was dead. I had shot the suspect through the side of his abdomen, which ruptured his intestines.

[8] Cannabis, South African slang for …

I contacted the charge office and informed them of the fatal shooting and requested that they notify the duty officer who was required to visit every shooting incident where someone had died.

We stood at the homestead and watched the sky turn from black to dark blue. I realised that within an hour, it would be light. I walked to the end of the property, and to my surprise, I noticed that the homestead was situated at the end of a cliff. I looked over the valley far below and realised that if I had run ten meters further, I would have run over this sheer cliff face and, without a doubt, fallen to my death.

While waiting for the duty officer we heard distant chanting. The voices of young men drew closer until we noticed about twenty-five armed men come running over a nearby hill. These men were armed with traditional weapons. Some had *knobkerries*, some assegais, and others had cattle hide shields. These young men chanted war songs and started performing traditional war dances. Realising the imminent danger we were in, we pointed our automatic rifles at them, but this did not deter them, and they became more aggressive. The chanting became louder as they advanced towards us. They were about fifty meters from us when I ordered them to disperse, but by then, they had worked themselves into such a frenzy that they didn't listen. Before they came any closer, I decided to empty my magazine, on automatic fire and aim well above their heads. The automatic gunfire startled them, and they realised the seriousness of the situation. They stopped chanting and stood still with their weapons raised in the air. Sergeant Mkhize ordered them to sit down and place their weapons on the ground as there had been enough bloodshed for one day.

The duty officer eventually arrived but quickly identified the hostile situation. He briefly looked at the dead boy, hurried back to his vehicle, and sped off at high speed.

At my office, Sergeant Mkhize and I questioned the suspect about his involvement in the murder of Mr Du Preez, but he was in total denial. It did cross my mind for a few brief moments that he might not be a suspect in this matter, which would have devastating consequences for me having shot and killed an unarmed, innocent man.

I told Sergeant Mkhize to drive the suspect to the State mortuary in a neighbouring town about twenty-five kilometres away. I would follow in my vehicle.

When I arrived at the mortuary, I asked the attendant which fridge Mr Du Preez had been placed in. With strong alcohol on his breath, he told me that he was in fridge number twelve. The attendant followed me into the icy cold mortuary and led me to the back, where the fridges were kept. The fridges were placed in two rows of ten against the far wall. The stench of decaying bodies was almost unbearable. He opened the fridge door, and I pulled out the stainless-steel tray on which my victim lay. Mr Du Preez looked at peace as he lay on his back. The blood had been cleaned from his head, but he was still clothed. Rigor mortis had started to set in, and his skin was ice cold and stiff. I pulled the tray out further and asked the attendant to take the foot end of the tray and help me carry the body to the stainless-steel table on which post mortems are performed. He looked at me puzzled but dared not argue with me. Together, we carried Mr Du Preez and placed him on the post-mortem table. I thanked him and told him that he may be excused.

I called for Sergeant Mkhize to bring the suspect to me. A bewildered boy stood in the mortuary whilst Sergeant Mkhize held him by the arm. “Today you are going to die, just like this man,” I told the boy. “I need to know who killed him, and you are going to tell me.” The boy shook his head profusely and denied any knowledge of the murder. I grabbed him by the wrists and told Sergeant Mkhize to grab his feet. We lifted the boy up and placed him face down on top of Mr Du Preez. The boy tried to struggle his way off the deceased, but we handcuffed his hands and feet to the handles at either end of the tray. The boy started to shout that God must help him, and he started to wet himself. “I told you today you are going to die. There’s no God here to save you.” Sergeant Mkhize and I lifted the tray and carried it back to the fridge. The boy had turned his face away from the deceased, who lay underneath him, but all his attempts to escape were in vain. We pushed the deceased, with the boy cuffed on top of him, into the fridge and closed the fridge door. All his screams suddenly became silent, and we decided to have a cigarette outside.

We returned to the fridges and opened the fridge in which the deceased and suspect lay. As the door opened, the suspect started to tell us that his brother killed the deceased. We removed him, unstuffed him from the tray, and replaced the victim's body back in the fridge. A visibly shaken boy stood in front of us and told us again that his brother, who I had shot, had killed the deceased. I told him that if he was lying, I would put him back in the fridge and leave him there to die. He clearly would cooperate and do anything to avoid that experience again.

Bongi told us that he and his brother, Sbu had been at the shebeen with their girlfriends that morning. They smoked dagga and spent the little money they had on beers. By the afternoon, the effects of beer and dagga started to wear off, and they had no more money. His brother suggested they rob the deceased and continue on their drinking spree. He claimed that his brother had an unlicensed pistol, which he fetched from their home and together, they walked to the Sizabantu Store. When they arrived at the store, they found about five boys whom they knew standing on the veranda watching soccer on the television set. They decided that it was too risky to rob the deceased at that time, so they would also watch the game and rob him when he locked the shop. They mingled with the other boys until the game was over. Happy that the team they were supporting had won, the five boys left the shop, discussing the game as they walked. His brother told him that they would wait around the corner of the building for the deceased to come out and lock the shop. This would be the perfect time to overpower him and steal his money. His brother was convinced the deceased took all the money with him at night and kept it in the house.

About thirty minutes later, a lady who worked in the shop came out and stood under the big tree. Bongi and Sbu moved further around the corner to avoid detection and waited. They heard the deceased at the front door and decided the time was right. They ran towards him, and he grabbed the deceased by the shirt and wanted to struggle him to the ground to overpower and rob him. They noticed the deceased wasn't carrying any money and realised then that they had to get into the shop to get the money. Bongi pulled his firearm out from under his shirt and shot the deceased once in the head. The deceased fell to the ground whilst the door was still unlocked. They pushed the door open

and ran into the shop. They made their way to the till behind the counter, and Bongi opened it and placed all the money in a plastic bag. Both ran out of the shop and hid themselves in the nearby bushes until it was dark. Delighted with their achievement, they decided to revisit the shebeen, where they treated all the girls to drinks.

Asked where the firearm was, Bongi told us that they had thrown it in an open toilet at a nearby primary school. I told him that I needed that firearm and that he would have to take us there.

We arrived at Bovini Primary School within an hour. Before we could get out of our vehicles, we were approached by an overweight middle-aged woman. She asked us what we wanted at her school. I explained that we were investigating the murder of Mr Du Preez and needed to follow up on information. She peered into the back of my vehicle and saw a visibly shaken Bongi seated there. I gathered that she knew the boy, so she started to object to our visit, saying that we were not welcome as we would disrupt the children who were writing exams. I told this lady, who never introduced herself but came across as being the principal, that it would be more of a disruption if I sent all the children home and cordoned off the entire school while I performed my investigation. Realising I wasn't going to be intimidated by her, she turned around and stormed off towards the school buildings. We removed Bongi from the back of the vehicle and told him to point out the toilet to us. We followed him to the back of the school, where we came across two corrugated iron buildings. Bongi walked into the male building and pointed out the toilet. The stench from the open, long-drop toilet was so overwhelming that I had to cover my nose with my hand and breathe through my mouth. I peeped into the sewage-filled toilet, covered at the bottom, I noticed the barrel of a handgun sticking out. Sergeant Mkhize turned and left. I thought that he was going to vomit, but later, he returned with a long piece of wire, which he used to get the firearm out of the sewer pit. We rushed back to my office, and whilst Sergeant Mkhize was processing the arrest, I sat behind my desk, took a deep breath, and exhaled slowly. I could almost not contain my excitement and recited in my mind how I was going to break the news of the arrest and firearm recovery to my commander.

News of the arrest spread quickly throughout the police structures, and my provincial commander congratulated me on my rapid response and apprehension of the perpetrators.

I applied for a position at the Violent Crime Investigation Unit. I had a reputation, and even though I was very young, my application was approved.

On my first day at the Serious and Violent Crime Investigation Unit, I was introduced to my Unit commander by my Regional commander. The unit commander was surprisingly young to hold that position, and his time in this unit was clearly evident in the stress lines on his face, his red, almost purple nose from excessive drinking and the grey hair that dominated his dark hair. He smiled broadly as he greeted me with a firm handshake. Our regional commander excused himself, as he didn't have time to socialise, and left. "Please take a seat," my new commander offered, pointing to the single chair opposite his desk. "I have divided twenty-five members into four areas: south coast, north coast, inland and greater inland. Each group has a group leader, who reports directly to me. Stand-by duties start on a Friday morning and end the following Friday morning. You will attend to all politically motivated murders, and I will divide the cases among the group leaders in each respective area. As you come highly recommended, I am going to assign you to the "inland area." This will include the Murchison and Boboyi areas. I must warn you that these areas are known as political hot-spot areas. Not only is there a conflict between ANC and IFP supporters, but ANC self-defence units and extremists have formed gangs. These conflicting gangs support opposing community leaders, which has resulted in entire families being killed. In retaliation, the opposing faction would seek revenge and kill an entire family supporting their rivals. Rural politically motivated murders did exist, but not to the extent of murders committed in more densely populated areas.

Every morning, you need to go to the Internal Stability Unit and obtain a detailed sitrep [`Situation Report'] of the previous night's activities. This sitrep, together with a number of murder cases to be investigated, must be forwarded to our Regional commander on a daily basis. Once a month, you and our Regional commander need to meet with the Commissioner of Police, Gen

George Vivaz, and supply him with a detailed report about political murders in our district. As you are aware, the first democratic elections are just around the corner, and these elections are about to be derailed. Not only is the IFP opposed to it, but there is also resistance from right-wing parties like the Conservative party, under Konstant Viljoen and far-right organisations such as the AWB, under the command of Eugène Terre'Blanche, who feel that this election is a betrayal of white supremacy and that this would mark the end of their dreams of owning their own, and totally independent "*volkstaat*". There is also mounting international pressure and pressure from within our borders that the election has to go ahead at all costs. Understood?" My throat was dry as I swallowed. I nodded my head and tried to comprehend all that was said to me. Just a few days ago, I was hardly known as the commander in a small town, and suddenly, I was catapulted to a unit that was under pressure and a position years before my time and experience. The responsibility that weighed on my shoulders was enormous. I had to answer to my unit commander, the district commissioner and the Commissioner of Police. I had not investigated cases of this magnitude but felt honoured to be trusted in such a senior position.

The detectives at the Violent Crime Investigation Unit were a rough bunch of guys. They worked hard and drank even harder, each just trying to cope with their workload and having to experience and survive the dangers of trying to apprehend very dangerous criminals. It so happened that most perpetrators were ANC supporters. My Unit commander came under constant criticism from the ANC Regional office and some high-ranking ANC members, like the current Minister of Police and former Minister of State Security, for not doing enough to curb the surge of violent crime and arrest IFP supporters, who they believed were the cause of the violence.

The following morning, at 07:00 sharp, I drove into the Internal Stability Unit base. (Now called POPS- Public Order Policing.) I needed to meet with the Colonel, who was the unit commander. Squads of young policemen from the Internal Stability Unit lounge near their Casspirs smoking. Some had crisp, clean uniforms and were ready for their day's shift, and others had crumpled camouflage outfits, eyes bloodshot from

exhaustion from the previous night patrols. A group sat against the wheel of their armoured vehicle, and their automatic rifles propped up next to them. I parked my vehicle and walked towards the Admin building, where I was sure to find the unit commander. On the flaxen winter lawn lay a row of bodies. All men were in civilian clothes, in a nonchalant posture of the dead. The morning sun gave them no warmth.

The unit commander comes out from the building. I count twenty bodies. The blood had dried on their fatal wounds, now almost orange in the spreading sun. “You see how many of them have been shot in the head?” The commander asks, and I notice for the first time the entry holes and the chunks of missing skulls on some of the bodies. In others, the exit wound is invisible, probably on the side facing the ground. “Yes,” I say. “Executions.”

“We don’t know; we heard a story from a bystander of a man with a dig handgun simply walking up to a man in the street and shooting him in the head, right there in the middle of the street in full view, last night. We keep hearing this story, but no one can or wants to identify this man,” he says. “Could be a serial killer out there, a maniac,” walking away towards the men at the Casspirs.

Shit, I think, that’s all I need, a psycho on the loose in the area, taking advantage of the slaughter to pursue his pathology. The irony of a serial killer plying his trade in this carnage stuns me. My mouth is dry, and my tongue pressed hard against my palate, holding back the dread.

After a while, the Colonel walked over to me and said abruptly; “Follow me. I think you may have a witness.” At the Colonel's office, he shows me a seat before moving to behind his desk. “Last night, a group of at least twenty young men armed with AK47 rifles attacked a prominent IFP supporter in his home, killing him, his mother and his children. A total of six family members died during that attack. His wife, who was pregnant, pleaded for her life, but they shot her anyway. She managed to survive the attack in spite of being shot four times. Her unborn child did not make it. My men managed to briefly interview her at the scene before she was removed by ambulance. She seems to know this group as they are members of the Sinyora Gang. She is in intensive care at the moment, but the chances of her pulling

through are slim." I recorded all the information on my clipboard and thanked the Colonel for his help.

I was at my office compiling an incident report for my commander when my office phone rang suddenly. The lady at the other end greeted me and told me that she was calling from the "Ops" room. She hurriedly explained that there had just been an attack on a minibus at the entrance to Boboyi. The number of fatalities was still unknown.

I rushed to the scene with five of my members. It was mandatory to wear a bullet-proof vest and to be armed with an R5 automatic rifle and pistol. On our arrival, we noticed that twelve passengers had succumbed to their injuries. The passengers were elderly males and females. There were also young children among the dead. While I took charge of the crime scene, my members interviewed possible witnesses and people who lived in the vicinity. An elderly lady told my detectives that she was standing at her fence chatting with her pregnant neighbour. Suddenly, they heard the sound of automatic gunfire coming from near the main road. Instinctively, she looked in that direction and noticed a large group of men shooting indiscriminately at a taxi. She ran for the cover of her home, leaving her much slower neighbour at the fence. Moments later, she peeped out of her lounge window and saw a group of at least fifteen armed men running towards her neighbour's house. Thembi pleaded with the men not to shoot her as she was pregnant. Without uttering a word, one of the men opened fire, hitting her several times in the chest. Leaving her on the ground, the men walked casually away. She heard one of them say; "The dog is dead; let's go, comrades."

Later that day, two minibus taxis arrived at a packed taxi rank at the peak of rush hour. The doors opened, and ten attackers armed with AK47s emerged. The crowd at the rank stampede in panic as the gunmen opened fire and mowed down the screaming commuters, leaving eighteen people dead and four injured. The gunmen were professional killers, calmly reloading their magazines when they were empty, and opened fire again. Once the slaughter was over, they quickly, but without rushing, climbed into their waiting transport and left.

It was decided that members of the SANDF should be deployed to the area to restore calm and stability. These

intentions were good, but the army and police have a reputation for not being able to work together. Animosity had existed since, during a joint op in Soweto, members of the SADF killed ten policemen in a “mistake identity” incident.

Also, members of the Special Forces conducted a pre-dawn raid on a house in Umtata. The justification for the attack is that the house was being used as a base for APLA (Azanian People Liberation Army). It was suspected that members of APLA would carry out attacks on unarmed white civilians.

In fact, the house was occupied by a number of schoolchildren, some for the school holidays. The raid was a disaster, with five of the children ranging in age from twelve to eighteen were shot to death in their beds. Tensions mounted between members of the army and members of the police, which often resulted in them refusing to work together.

Members of the Yankee Unit, as we were called because of our call-sign, consumed large quantities of alcohol on a daily basis. I think it was blatantly clear that we were fuelled by alcohol, but even though our commanders knew or suspected that we drank on duty, they sympathised as this was a task that very few members wanted to undertake. It didn’t take long before I also had a half-jack of whiskey hidden at the back of my bottom desk drawer. Whiskey would substitute milk in our morning coffee. Lead detectives were divided into areas that covered our entire police area, stretching from the coast to the Berg and from Durban to the Eastern Cape. I was assigned an area that was considered to be a political hotspot, with murders being committed on a daily basis. Political factions wiped out entire families, and then there would be revenge attacks; these would be even more brutal and many more people were killed.

At night, whilst attending a murder scene, we would hear the sirens of a crowd-control police vehicle rushing off to another massacre. Bodies from this murder scene would just be removed, and we would be notified of the next murder scene. Not only did I deal with opposing factions killing each other, but I also break-away groups from the same faction that would kill each other. Literally, thousands of people lost their lives in the early nineties due to political violence.

Each lead detective investigated hundreds of murder cases each month. Stress levels were high, and alcohol consumption

was even higher. This soon became a coping mechanism not only for no numb feeling of dismay at what humans could do to each other but also for "Dutch Courage" needed when entering these volatile and dangerous areas. We became so immune to witnessing violent, senseless murders that, at a murder scene where the victims, mainly old women and children, were hacked to death and set alight, we thought that the smell of burning human flesh in the thick black smoke of a burning hut, was appetising and made us hungry, so we decided to have a few beers and enjoy a braai, whilst waiting for the flames to subside so we could extract the human remains.

Every time I attended a gruesome scene, something died inside of me. I became emotionless and had little compassion for crying widows and children. This was a job, and I was not a social worker. We had witnessed so much that nothing affected us, or so we thought. The effect these murders had, with all the bloodshed and violence, would only play out years later. Politically motivated murders were brutal, horrific and spiralling out of control.

At least once a month, I was summoned to the Commissioner of Police's office in Pretoria to account for the increases. It so happened that more ANC supporters were arrested than IFP supporters, not because of their political affiliation but because more murders were being committed by ANC supporters or breakaway factions who still supported the ANC. As a result, we were accused of supporting the IFP, and even allegations that we were supplying the IFP with weapons surfaced.

A prominent editor and political journalist [de Haas, Mary (2001)] wrote a book entitled `Unequal Protection'. In it, she describes some of the cases I investigated. She also claims that members of this unit assisted the IFP in their fight against the ANC by supplying them with firearms, arresting prominent ANC members, and detaining them without trial, as a state of emergency had been declared. This meant that any person could be detained for up to ninety days without trial, and I took full advantage of that privilege.

To compound the complex situation, the ANC established "Self-defence Units." These so-called self-defence units were established by community leaders, who selected young, fit and

trained warriors. Their primary objective was to defend the community they served from any attacks from IFP supporters and rival gang members; these self-defence units would extort locals, who would need to pay for protection. These poor people, who struggled every day to put food on the table had to also feed members of these units or pay them. Failure to comply would result in them being killed.

These self-defence units created “no-go” areas. Anyone found trespassing in these areas would be killed, often resulting in community members having to reach their homes by walking around the no-go zone, which was long and sometimes through treacherous terrain.

After lengthy investigations, I established that a gang known as the Sinjora’s were committing the large majority of the murders in my area. During their killing spree that lasted about six months, they were responsible for the deaths of countless victims. The leader of this gang was a twenty-five-year-old male known as Pokwe Dladla. He had previously been an IFP supporter, but supporters of the ANC had killed his entire family. He became disillusioned when the IFP supporters refused to rally behind him in his quest for revenge, so he formed a gang within the ANC. He did not support the ANC but would rather kill ANC supporters, hoping this would spark more tension and result in a cross-faction confrontation. Pokwe formed a gang with like-minded individuals, and they went on a killing spree. Dozens of ANC supporters were killed, and when his thirst for blood wasn’t quenched, he turned his attention to IFP supporters and eliminated countless numbers of families. He had hoped that the IFP supporters would take revenge on the ANC supporters. This notorious gang became commonly known as the Hi-Tec gang. All gang members wore Hi-Tec running shoes, and an admission to join this gang was a pair of Hi-Tec running shoes.

One night, I attended a murder scene where every living thing was killed, and the house was torched. The eldest boy, aged fifteen, managed to escape and watched from a nearby bush as his parents, grandparents and siblings were massacred to death with bush knives. This boy was an emotional wreck. He had no family to go to and, in an instant, lost everything he loved and owned. A few days later I decided to pay him a visit at school. He told me that since this incident, he was sleeping in his classroom

and that his principal would bring him a plate of food every morning before school. I told this boy that there was a reward for the arrest of Pokwe, and he might want to assist us in capturing him. Not only would he avenge his family's death, but he could also make himself some money in the process. Initially, he refused, but by the end of the interview, he said that he needed to think about it and that I should come and see him in a few days.

A few days passed, and I went to see the boy at school. He agreed to assist in arresting Pokwe, but was also aware of the dangers involved. More than money, he wanted retribution. I told him that he would need to infiltrate this gang and let me know of their hideouts, so I could arrest them, and he agreed. A few days passed, and I wondered whether he was still alive when he suddenly arrived at my office. He told me that he needed a pair of size ten Hi-Tec running shoes as a gift to Pokwe before they would allow him to join the gang. He also explained that they had given him a litre of petrol to drink, to determine his seriousness about joining the gang. They explained to him that when he came with the Hi-Tec running shoes, they would give him a firearm, and he had to kill an ANC member by shooting him in the head as part of his initiation. I felt instantly sick at the thought of the price this boy was willing to pay to catch this bastard. I told him that I would come and see him at school within the next few days.

I contacted the captain in charge of the Internal Security Branch and told him that I needed a pair of size ten Hi-Tec running shoes with a tracking device built into the sole. A few days later, I was told to collect the shoes and antennae from the Security branch. I was handed the shoes and the type of antennae used to track wild animals—the kind that beeped louder the closer one came to the target.

I proceeded to the school, handed the boy the pair of shoes, and told him to let me know when he handed them over to Pokwe. I advised him to try his best not to assassinate an ANC supporter, as this might cause trouble for him in the future, and he reluctantly agreed.

By the end of that week the boy contacted me and informed me that he had handed Pokwe the shoes and that they had given him a revolver, which he had to use in the initiation. I

told him that we would wait for the next attack on an ANC member, and he could take the credit for that murder with Pokwe.

That evening my detectives and I parked our vehicles near the main road and started to walk until we heard a beeping signal from the antennae. We had walked for only about ten minutes in a rural location when suddenly automatic gunfire rang out from a nearby house. We dived into the long grass and heard the bullets as they whisked narrowly past us. We leopard crawled through the long grass until we were safely hidden in thick bush. I realised immediately that Pokwe was using scouts and guards to protect and warn him, and that his capture might not be as easy as I had initially assumed. I decided that we should retreat and rethink our strategy to apprehend Pokwe.

The following day, I had a meeting with my members. I told them that I'd decided to hunt Pokwe during daylight. Visibility would be good, and the chances were good he would not be as heavily protected. We armed ourselves and proceeded into the volatile area in search of Pokwe. We left our vehicles at a nearby school and walked the hills with the antennae, hoping to get a signal of him. Many homes in the foothills had been left abandoned, and some were totally destroyed by all the violence. This gave Pokwe enough opportunity to create a camp and a hideout, and finding him without assistance would be nearly impossible. We walked to the top of the highest hill and pointed the antennae in all directions, until we finally heard a faint beep. We knew that he had to be in the direction of the river far below, so we set out on foot, fully aware of the possibility of an ambush. As we walked towards the river, the beeping from the antennae became louder. Stealthily, we walked through the long grass and towards the sound of the antennae. Finally, we were close enough to see the river and noticed four abandoned houses situated on the banks of the river. My heart raced at the thought of us being so close to the notorious killer. We crouched down in the grass and surveyed the houses for any movement, but saw none. Using sign language, I beckoned my detectives towards the houses. We walked slowly towards the houses, when suddenly three males came running out of the house and headed to the bush. We wanted to shoot at them, but they disappeared in a flash right before our eyes. I was convinced that one of them was

Pokwe. Some of my detectives ran after them, but soon returned as they had disappeared, as if into thin air. We proceeded to the house and determined that they had been sleeping there for quite some time. A variety of blankets strewn over the floor, and a cast iron pot sat near an open fireplace. I proceeded into the bush and soon realised that there was a network of footpaths leading deep into the bush. Again I lifted the antennae to establish a signal, and heard a faint beep towards the bush. We would need to be more vigilant if we were to apprehend Pokwe, so we moved deep into the bush, walking after the sound of the antennae. Just when we thought we were close to him the beeping sound faded, and we realised he was on the run.

We chased Pokwe all day, going up hills and down hills, but just when we thought we were close enough to arrest him, the beeping sound became softer as he ran away. I knew Pokwe would be too nervous to sleep that night, so I gave my detectives the night off and told them that we would chase him again the following day.

The next day, we walked the hills again in search of our suspect. We knew he was on the run and must have wondered how we knew where to look for him. Every day for a week, we chased after Pokwe until he was exhausted from trying to evade arrest, and finally, he surrendered. A weak and physically exhausted Pokwe Dladla and two of his comrades stood in front of me, their hands cuffed behind their backs. I looked at Pokwe and could hardly believe that such a thin, weak, feeble-looking person could cause so much death and destruction. Now, without his firearms, he was nothing but a scared and timid boy. In essence, Pokwe Dladla was the first serial killer arrested on the South Coast; because the killing was deemed to be politically motivated, he was not recognised as a serial killer.

Political violence spread across KZN at a rapid pace. Literally thousands of people were murdered by opposing factions, and entire villages were totally destroyed, often leaving animals deserted and without food. Our provincial commander needed a detailed report regarding the surge of violence in the Midlands and told my commander that he and I should make our way to Margate airport as he had summoned a plane to take us to the

Midlands provincial commander who needed an accurate assessment of the vast devastation.

A Pilates, two-engine plane arrived at Margate Airport, and we flew towards the Midlands. Whilst we flew over the rural areas, scattered between flourishing farms, we were devastated at the extent of the destruction and the number of homesteads on fire or smouldering as homes were burned to the ground. My commander and I made detailed notes of the devastation below. Suddenly, the pilot stood up from his seat in the cockpit and started to walk down the aisle casually. My commander and I looked at each other nervously as the unmanned plane surged forward. The pilot eventually made his way back to the cockpit when suddenly we felt the plane heading straight up, leaving my commander and I clutching our seats as our stomachs turned from the sudden change in direction. We continued upwards until we heard the twin engines strain under the high altitude. Just before the engine stalled, we felt the plane heading towards the ground whilst we were facing upwards. Before we came crashing to the earth, the plane was brought under control, and we heard the engines strain against the force of gravity. My commander was not impressed with the pilot, and we wondered if he was drunk. Just when the plane surged forward and was under control, we suddenly felt the plane nose-dive off a cliff. We again grabbed hold of our seats as our stomachs churned at the change of direction. Just before colliding with the earth, the pilot pulled the plane horizontally, and we surged forward again. After about thirty minutes, we were relieved to find that we were heading back to Margate.

During the week that followed, our provincial commander again told my commander that he needed an update on the violence in the Midlands and that a plane would take us to the airport within an hour. My commander, who also dreaded another episode, told our provincial commander that he and I had prior arrangements, but he would ensure that one of the other members undertook the task.

Two hours later, my commander summoned me to his office. He had just replaced the phone receiver, and he was as white as a ghost. “We need to go to Bulwer urgently. I have just received a call from the station commander, who told me that a light aeroplane had crashed into a cliff on a mountain behind the

town. He had sent a patrol vehicle to the crash site and was awaiting a sitrep," he said as he grabbed his car keys and stormed out of his office.

After a tense two-hour drive, we finally arrived at the police station in Bulwer. The station commander saw us park in the designated parking area and came out of the red brick building to greet us. A worried-looking Warrant Officer quickly greeted us. He stood for a moment, trying to catch his breath before continuing. "At 11:15, we received a report of an aeroplane crash on Mt Curry. I immediately sent my patrol van to the accident scene. The patrol vehicle is still on the scene, but it is reported that it is a police plane due to the distinctive police markings. He believes both occupants succumbed during the crash and were trapped inside the mangled plane. I have requested the assistance of the fire brigade in Pietermaritzburg to assist in removing the bodies from the plane.

Not a word was said on our way back to the office. Again, God had my back, I kept thinking.

It was Christmas Day 1995. My young son played excitedly with the toys Santa had left for him under a brightly lit and colourful Christmas tree. My wife was in the kitchen preparing salads for lunch, and I stood around the hot coals enjoying a beer as I braaied. My home telephone rang, and I was suddenly startled by the ring, but I thought it was someone who wanted to wish us Merry Christmas. Reluctantly, I placed my beer on a small table beside my fire and walked into the house. A friendly lady, at the other end, apologised for bothering me and introduced herself from the Ops room. She told me that there had been a massacre in Izingolweni, but it was still unclear how many people had succumbed in the massacre. She had already told my members that we would gather at the Izinolweni police station within an hour to assess the situation. I replaced the receiver and proceeded to gulp my beer, clearly irritated that I had been disturbed on Christmas day.

Within an hour, I arrived at the police station in Izingolweni only to find my members waiting for me. They had gathered under blue gum trees and were chatting and laughing, clearly not disturbed by this massacre. The station commander walked out

of the face brick building and walked over to where we had gathered.

"Gents, good afternoon," he said. "And also, Merry Christmas to you. We have a situation on our hands. My patrol staff reported to me that about fifty homesteads have been attacked and set alight. At this time, we are not sure exactly how many people have been fatally wounded or what the exact motive is. The attack occurred over a remote and vast area in the Msimbi location. I suspect that the massacre is politically motivated as it might be related to an act of revenge. This is only my assumption due to the number of casualties. Msimbi location is predominately an ANC-controlled area under the leadership of Chief Dlomo. When I reported this incident, I also summoned a helicopter from the air wing in Durban." He briefly came to attention again before turning back to his office. I realised that I would undertake the crime scene investigation from the air, due to the vast area that needed to be covered. I told my members that they needed to visit every homestead involved and conduct each on its own merits. They agreed and understood and left me waiting for the helicopter.

Once in the air, I could get a clear understanding of the devastation below. Some homesteads were still burning, whilst others were totally ruined and burned to the ground. Women sat outside their burning homes, clutching their dead husbands, and rocked back and forth and wailing in disbelief. As we flew over the crime scene, some homesteads also had all their livestock slaughtered. This scale of devastation had reached paramount proportions, and the thick smoke in certain areas made visibility difficult, even from the air.

Below, the only vehicles were those of the police, hurrying from one homestead to another, either to remove the deceased males or try to save the injured. I recognised the homestead of Chief Dlomo. His was the biggest and properly built, unlike the round mud huts that were scattered in the hills. His home was not spared and was still burning. A teenage boy lay amongst dry mielies in a small field near the house. His attempts to run away and escape the violence ended in his death.

A photographer from the FBI Lab (Fingerprints and Ballistic Investigation Lab) accompanied us on our flight. Every crime scene was photographed from the air, depicting the vastness of

the devastation. Mortuary vans loaded the bodies, often loading more bodies than what was permitted. Homesteads that were still burning were left to burn to the ground, as distinguishing all the fires was impossible.

I regrouped with my detectives, and just before dusk, we decided to retreat back to the office. I gathered all the crime scene notes and started to prepare a docket. Chief Dlomo had also been hacked to death, and his testicles were removed and shoved in his mouth. This old Zulu custom is synonymous with the victim being totally defeated.

Over the next few days, I started to investigate this massacre. It emerged that an impi of IFP supporters were responsible for the massacre. The motive, an elderly man told me, was that the taxi route from their stronghold would pass through Msimbi location. This, unfortunately, was just how the gravel road wound itself through the hills to the town. He claimed that on days when the elderly received their grants, they would catch a taxi to town. On their way home, after buying a month's groceries, they would be attacked on the taxi, leaving them without food and money. This thuggery reached boiling point, and the elders decided to retaliate. Teenage boys who wanted to prove their worth undertook the massacre with the understanding that all males needed to be killed, leaving the women and girls destitute without husbands, sons, homes and livestock.

Within a few days, a special task team from Pretoria was assigned to the investigation. There were too many allegations that we sided with IFP supporters, and it was suggested that nothing would come of this investigation if we were to investigate this massacre. To my knowledge, not a single person was convicted for the massacre.

I soon became a top detective at the unit, so when a police station in the Eastern Cape was attacked, three policemen lost their lives, and a large number of weapons were stolen, I was requested to assist the Eastern Cape detectives in their investigation, even although it happened out of our area of jurisdiction. I established from the surviving policemen on duty at the time of this incident that a group of white males were responsible for this attack. They alleged that a group of six white

males arrived at the police station in a white van with a canopy. Two of them exited the van and walked into the charge office, thinking that only one policeman was on duty, but instead, the white guys found five policemen on duty in the charge office at that time. Policemen were strategically placed around the police station, as they had received information from the Internal Security branch that a heavily armed group of white males were going to attack the police station that night. The two white males started to shoot randomly at the policemen in the charge office, instantly killing three. Other policemen situated around the police station returned fire and shot at the occupants inside the vehicle. The two white guys in the charge office ran around the counter and came across a steel trunk, in which firearms were kept. Each grabbed a side of the trunk and ran outside to their vehicle. They placed the trunk in the back of the van and reversed out of there, still shooting and being shot at. All six managed to escape unscathed with a trunk full of firearms.

I started the investigation about two weeks later after the local detective failed to come up with any information. I was relieved to get out of investigating politically motivated crimes and having to attend countless murder scenes involving countless victims. I focused on one case, which was great. I investigated the case on hand for about six months before making a breakthrough. I spent a lot of time in different pubs, buying different people drinks in an attempt to gather information, until it eventually came. I met a lady at a local pub one night, and after chatting for only a short while, I asked her, as a matter of interest, if she had heard about the attack on the police station. She told me that six men involved had met at her house one evening about a week before this incident. At the time, she was dating one of them. The six men drank brandy and coke and discussed how they would attack the police station. Their information was that only one half-asleep policeman would be on duty at the time. They planned to rob the police station of its firearms only. After showing some interest in the matter and asking her a few pertinent questions, I told her that I was a police officer and the investigating officer in the case. She was shocked and angry at her own gullibility and for talking to me so freely after only a few drinks. Within a few days, I arrested the boyfriend, Henry Schultz, who was also the group leader. I

questioned him about the firearms, but he refused to say anything that would incriminate himself, so I handcuffed him and took him to the police station he attacked and detained him as a suspect over the weekend. I knew all too well that the policemen there would not take it kindly that he was the main perpetrator behind the killing of their colleagues and that by Monday, he would be telling me about the sweats he stole as a kid. When I left him inside the charge office, he was absolutely terrified and could hardly answer questions asked by the charge office staff. He wanted to talk to me, but I ignored his request and turned and walked away, leaving him with a black policeman on duty.

On Monday, I went back to the police station and requested to book my suspect out for further investigation. When he was fetched from the cell, I couldn't believe it was the same person I had brought there the Friday before. His arm was in a sling, and he had bags under his eyes. He would not talk to me in front of the black policeman, but on the way back to my office, he started to relax and told me that the policeman took him out of the cell and took him into the charge office, where they made him do push-ups the entire night. When he collapsed from exhaustion, he was kicked in the ribs and his head was forced into a bucket of cold water. He sustained a dislocated shoulder during exercises and received no medical treatment for his injuries. I asked him if he now wanted to tell me about the firearms, and if I was wasting my time, I would take him back to the police station where he had been detained. He agreed to assist me in any way possible. All he requested was that when he appeared in court, I would not oppose bail, to which I agreed.

We drove to a suburb south of Durban where Henry pointed out the house of the leader of the "*Ystergarde,*" their military wing. The leader had recently been killed in Botswana whilst in an attempt to overthrow the government. He was in possession of some of the stolen firearms at the time of his assassination. We then drove to Pretoria, where he pointed out the house of an assassinated professor to me. The *Ystergarde* leadership believed that this professor was sympathetic towards the ANC and needed to be assassinated before he became more involved with cadres in exile and, in that way, overthrow the government. This professor was assassinated with a single shot to the back of his head whilst he read a newspaper in his lounge.

The person responsible for this assassination was an active member of the *Ystergarde*. He was well-trained and spent many years fighting in the bush war. He was known in the defence force as a `Recce'. Once the war was over, he was repatriated back into the military as an instructor. He could not cope without the excitement of fighting a war and "accidentally" hit a black cadet for disobeying an order. This cadet died in the military hospital a week later from a brain haemorrhage. As a result, he was dishonourably discharged from the military. He needed a war to fight and belonged in the bush. He could not cope with civilian and city life, so he became an active member of the AWB.

With his track record, he was soon promoted to the *Ystergarde*, where he became a lieutenant. He dreamed that a civil war would break out between blacks and whites so he could kill the bastards. Harry continued to explain that his desire to kill black people was fuelled by his racist upbringing and the death of his father at the hands of labourers on their cattle farm when he was at the tender age of eight years old. He had no home and preferred living in the bush. His trademark was not to wear shoes.

I met with the investigating officer to confirm that the information was correct and, if so, establish the status of the investigation. I spoke to the investigating officer, Captain Gous, from the Internal Security branch. He told me that the elderly man of God was relaxing at home with his wife and three grandchildren. The youngest was three years old, and the eldest was eleven years old. The assassin was an expert in firearms and stalked his prey. He would strike unexpectedly and disappear without a trace. The plan was well thought out, he explained. The house, in the quiet leafy suburb, was watched, and movements recorded over a period of time. The day selected to undertake the assassination was Guy Fawkes which would provide maximum cover. He continued to explain that a loud and sudden bang of a firearm could easily be mistaken as a firecracker. The choice of firearm was deliberate. The hunting rifle was of large calibre, with a breechblock designed to retain the cartridge in the firing mechanism after the shot. There would be the opportunity for only one shot and no time to search for an ejected brass shell or to remove evidence. The cartridge was loaded for especially

high impact. It was a starfire[9] lead bullet in a nickel casing that would spread when it hit a body. Captain Gouws continued to explain that the house was at the end of a panhandle and was not visible from the road. The premises was not walled and had no entrance gate. The assassin did not walk up the long driveway but gained access through the garden fronting the street and stepped over a low wall bordering the neighbour's garden. The curtains of the large windows were drawn, but he knew the family room where the man and his wife usually relaxed and watched television. He was careful not to step into any flower beds and stayed on the lawn. He stood under a tree some thirty meters from the house. He cupped his hand around a match flame as he lit a cigarette. He smoked whilst watching the house from the darkened garden. The man inside heard the explosion of crackers as different colours lightened the night sky. The gap between the curtains at the side of the window drew his attention. He snubbed his cigarette butt in the crook of two branches and stepped closer. He could see them inside through the gap in the curtains; the man sat with his back towards the window. To his right was a child, a little boy. He did not expect the man to have any visitors. He did not plan for this eventuality, but that could not stop him now. Diagonally opposite the man sat his wife and next to her two children. The group were playing cards. There were images of the eight o'clock news on the television.

He lifted his firearm. The barrel was barely centimetres from the window pane. He aimed at the back of the man's head, controlled his breathing and squeezed the trigger. A loud report and a powder flash followed, and he saw the man slump forward in his chair. He fled into the night, hearing the wife and children scream hysterically behind him.

They suspected that a right-wing activist was responsible for the death of Professor Smith and suspected that he might have received military training, as only one shot was fired that hit the professor squarely at the back of the head. No powder residue was recovered on his head, which indicated that the assassin was outside the house when firing the fatal shot. He said something very interesting though. On searching the garden bed

[9] Also known as `dumdum' bullets, prohibited for use in war.

inside his property, and adjacent to the road in front of the house, they found what looked like footprints in the flowerbed. It appeared to be a barefoot print as it didn't have the same characteristics as a shoe print. At first, they dismissed this footprint as belonging to the gardener, but the professor's wife indicated that they do not have a gardener and utilised a gardening service. A snubbed cigarette butt was recovered in the crook of a tree, and it was suspected that the perpetrator stood under the tree enjoying a cigarette before undertaking the hit. The murder was still under investigation, and he was expecting information from an informant who had infiltrated the AWB. He also told me that the professor was shot with a high-powered rifle, possibly used in hunting large game. I knew well that an R1 rifle had long since been the weapon of choice during bush warfare. The R5 rifle was much shorter and lighter and had the characteristics of the R1 and AK47. This was the weapon of choice in urban warfare and crowd control. Captain Gouws assured me that a hunting firearm was used and not an R1 or R5 rifle. Henry, who had accompanied me on my investigation, told me that during a bombing spree, AWB members stayed on a farm in the North West Province belonging to one of their members. Many of them had left their homes and businesses and came to this farm with their wives and children. Their leader had promised them a new life in a newly formed "*volkstaat*," their Promised Land where no blacks, Indians or English-speaking people were permitted.

We proceeded to a farm in the North West Province in search of the suspect but found that the farm was deserted. It was evident by the number of tyre tracks and fireplaces that many people had visited this farm, but now, not even a single farm labourer was in sight. I contacted the investigating officer, who told me that two AWB supporters responsible for a bomb blast at a Germiston taxi rank and three supporters who were responsible for a bomb explosion on electricity pylons in the North West Province had been arrested. After their arrest, the AWB supporters hiding out on the farm dispersed and assembled on a farm in the Orange Free State, where their leadership addressed them. The supporters were told that the AWB top structure decided to abandon their efforts to disrupt the National elections, and hopes and dreams of having their own Promised

Land also vanished before their eyes. This left them destitute without homes or businesses. Many of them were forced to sleep in their vehicles and try to pick up the pieces of their shattered lives. Their hopes of starting a new life in a *volksstaat* crumbled before their eyes, and their hopes and trust in their leadership also died. The suspect, known as *kaalvoet Klaas* (barefoot Klaas) had been there and had left a day or two prior to us arriving there. We went as far as towns near the Botswana border searching for the suspect, but he was always a step ahead of us. Eventually, I received information that he had fled to a farm outside Bloemfontein. We proceeded to this farm, which was situated about fifty kilometres outside of Bloemfontein. This was a maise and cattle farm with huge sheds and a silo near what looked like an office block. A tractor pulling a trailer was heading towards us along the gravel farm road. As the tractor neared us in a cloud of dust, I noticed a red-faced, pot-bellied man driving the tractor. He raised the front of his leather hat slightly to get a better view of us. When he arrived where we were standing, he brought the tractor to an abrupt halt and quickly climbed off it. I was surprised that such an overweight man could move his body so quickly. Fortunately, I did not resemble the regular cop, with a short back and sides and a moustache, so the farmer didn't suspect that anything was wrong. I was also with my suspect, who resembled an AWB member, with a large beard, frame, khaki button shirt, and matching pants. The farmer calmed down when he realised that we were not a threat and greeted us politely. He invited us to his office as he shook the dust from his clothes. We gladly followed him, and I thought it best not to surprise him with the fact that I was a cop. We accompanied the farmer to his office, where he removed his hat and hit it a few times to shake off the dust. He showed us to two chairs before sitting down with a big sigh. He inquisitively asked how he could help, and I quickly took the lead. I replied by asking him if he had heard about the disaster faced by us AWB supporters just to make casual conversation and break the ice, before enlightening him of our visit. He frowned and rubbed his eyes before replying. He heard that the AWB was in disarray as the leadership had abandoned their ideals for a *volksstaat*, leaving hundreds of followers destitute, he said, but he didn't know much more than that. I told him that the supporters had scattered after the

announcement, many not knowing how they would make ends meet or feed their families. I told him that I had sent my wife and son to Namibia for their own safety but promised to join them once I found my brother. I told him that my brother was mentally unstable and that I had to find him before there was a tragedy. The last I heard was that he headed for Bloemfontein in an attempt to evade the police, who needed to return him to an asylum where he was receiving treatment for schizophrenia. The farmer sat forward in his chair, listening intently to what I had to say. "*Ja*, so how do you think I can help?" he asked, puzzled. I didn't answer but just shook my head in dismay. "What's his name?" he asked sympathetically. "His name is Klaas, my younger brother," I replied, trying to sound convincing. He thought for a while before replying; "No, sorry, never heard of him, but strangely enough, a guy came here two days ago looking for a job. I felt that this guy must have fallen on hard times because he needed a bath and a shave. I pitied him because he didn't even have shoes. He told me his name was Andries. My heart suddenly started to race, and I had to try not to show my excitement. "Oh, the little bugger. Now he is going by his second name."

"Come, I'll show you. He is working in the shed." The farmer replied, excited to help. When we entered the shed, I noticed Klaas bailing straw at the back of the shed. He looked up when he realised he was not alone and squinted his eyes to see us better against the sharp light outside. "Andries," the farmer called out. "Your brother is here somewhere." Klaas knew that he was in trouble as he didn't have a brother. He dropped what he was doing and started to run towards the only opening in the shed, where we had just walked through. He realised I stood in his way to escape, so he tried to sidestep me before fleeing the building. Fortunately, I realised his intentions and stepped to my right as he approached me. As he tried to sprint past me, I leapt towards him and wrapped my arms around his chest. Both of us came crashing to the ground in a heap of dust as I slammed my one-hundred-and-twenty-kilogram frame into him. The farmer looked down at us bewildered but stood aside as I managed to overpower Klaas. He was not as strong as I had anticipated, but maybe he was weak due to being malnourished. I jumped on his back and managed to cuff him without much further resistance.

I pulled him to his feet and ushered him to my motor vehicle. The farmer was lost for words and preferred retreating to his office as he now knew I was a cop and not in the mood for any cheek from him. I searched the shed for the firearm, which I found next to the pile of hay and a blanket where he slept. Not much was said on the way to the police station. I glanced in my rearview mirror and saw that Klaas's head hung low. He knew that he was beaten. I detained him in the police cells in Bloemfontein and notified the investigating officer of his arrest.

The following morning, we proceeded back to my office. I had not finished with this suspect yet, but I kept my cards very close to my chest. On our arrival, I made my suspect, who had been very cooperative since his detention in the Transkei, sit at my desk. I offered him a cup of coffee, which he gladly accepted. "I have a few more questions for you, Harry," I exclaimed. "Tell me about the bomb blast at the hotel in Munster." I looked him squarely in the eyes as I leaned over my desk towards him. "I know you guys were involved there, too."

He realised that he could not withhold anything from me and that if he did not give me all his cooperation, I would not hesitate to take him back to the Transkei and detain him for longer than just a weekend. He explained that they had regular meetings at the hotel, as the owner, Dirk Van Niekerk, was also a member of their organisation. Information came to the fore that he was having a secret affair with one of the kitchen staff, and for this, it was felt they needed to teach him a lesson. The provincial head of the organisation (who was later killed in a botched assassination attempt in Botswana) came down on Dirk like a ton of bricks for having an affair with a coloured girl. Dirk pleaded for mercy, but it fell on deaf ears. He should know better than to betray the beliefs of the organisation.

As Harry was the regional leader, he took it upon himself to plan and execute the retaliation against Dirk. Harry explained that a wooden bench was attached to the wall in the pub. This bench was covered in foam and had a hinged lid, giving access to storage space. After one of their meetings, he placed a bomb inside the bench and set the timer. An hour later, when the hotel was closed, the bomb exploded, completely ruining the hundred-year-old hotel. "Good. We'll get back to the details in a while. Tell

me about the attempted assassination of Peter Cwele, the leader of the Young Communist Party at the time," I asked sternly. He cleared his throat and gave it some thought before answering. After composing himself, he told me that the leadership of the AWB wanted prominent leaders of the ANC assassinated. Many whites detested Peter Cwele because of the racial slogans, he would say openly during rallies and media briefings. These slogans were directed at white farmers. The leadership of the AWB nominated a member of his cell to undertake the assassination. There was no one better than Patrick Jones to execute Peter Cwele.

Patrick Jones had spent fifteen years in the army's permanent force and retired with the rank of Major. He was awarded every medal for bravery and good service during his career. He also commanded ten military BATS who took part in a military coup in the Seychelles. Needless to say, this attempted coup failed, partly because the South African government called it off only hours before the coup. Patrick Jones resigned from the defence force amid an ANC take over, but rendered his services as a mercenary. He led a group of mercenaries to Guinea, which eventually resulted in the overthrow of the military government.

After another cup of coffee, Harry explained that Patrick had managed to get into Mr Cwele's yard. He remained hidden amongst the shrubs for a week, undetected and waiting for the opportunity to assassinate Mr Cwele. Despite the cameras and dogs and security on the premises, he remained hidden, dressed in camouflage with his rifle and waited. He could not execute his plan to assassinate Peter Cwele because a vehicle with tinted windows would drive into the premises through an electrified gate and enter into the garage through an electrified garage door. He was never able to establish who the vehicle's occupants were and if Mr Cwele was actually in the vehicle or not. The vehicle would leave the premises in the same way, so despite his efforts, he could never identify his target and take a shot. "If that assassination plot had been successful, it would have changed the political landscape of the country," he explained.

He further went on to tell me about their attempts to assassinate the now-president, Nelson Mandela, during his inauguration. He explained that they had obtained the blueprints of the Union Building and decided to gain access to the building

through the stormwater pipes. Once inside, they would assassinate the president. A small group of only three heavily armed men would take part in this exercise. They later decided to abandon this idea as they felt it would be too risky, so they devised a plan to assassinate him using a remote-controlled aeroplane with a bomb attached to it. He did not explain why they had not carried out their plan. I could not imagine the consequences if they had managed to carry out their plan successfully. In all likelihood, we would have had a civil war on our hands and a world icon assassinated. This would have had far-reaching international consequences. They decided that it was too risky to assassinate political figures, so they decided to focus their attention on the masses, so they decided to poison the water systems leading into townships and locations using cyanide.

It was decided first to target a water purification system in the Natal Midlands, as one of their members knew someone who worked there and had a good knowledge of which water was directed to the nearby location. This so-called friend was in a position of authority and would be able to give them access to the plant. This didn't materialise as the members who would undertake this operation were arrested for possession of unlicensed firearms and ammunition prior to them being able to execute their plans. "An arms cache was buried in vacant land in Polela. Members knew of this arms cache, and when the shit hit the fan, they could access the cache."

"Polela," I thought. This was a residential area. A chill ran down my spine when I thought that arms were hidden right under the noses of the residents, without them knowing of their existence. "Come show me," I commanded. We drove to Polela where Harry pointed out a vacant land adjacent to the main road. I parked, and we walked to a lonely tree at the edge of this vacant property. Harry pointed to a clearing under the tree and told me that this was where the arms cash was buried. I looked at him with a blank expression on my face. Firstly, I did not believe him, and if there was an arms cash, I sure as hell was not going to dig it up.

As if Harry could read my mind, he fell on his knees and started digging with his bare hands. Thirty minutes later, he came across a wooden box about a meter underground. I instructed

him to stand back while I notified my commander, who, in turn, notified the bomb disposal unit.

Within minutes, we heard sirens in the distance, and soon, the bomb disposal unit arrived at our location. Warrant Officer Weltz was a bomb disposal expert, and we were fortunate that he was within our district and not summoned elsewhere. He carefully removed the wooden box after photographing it in the ground. While we stood a distance away, he carefully opened the box. Only when he was satisfied that it was safe, he beckoned me closer. I was astonished at the sight of the firearms. A total of five AK47 rifles, three R1s, three Barrette 9mm pistols, six offensive hand grenades, three defensive hand grenades and over one hundred rounds of ammunition were inside this box. Warrant Officer Weltz again photographed the weapons before carefully loading them into his vehicle. My commander later congratulated me and announced that this was the biggest arms cash found in Natal to date.

"Ok, now let's get back to the hotel bombing," I said, sitting back in my chair, listening and taking notes as he spoke. I thought this was a good time to revisit that incident. This was a successful interviewing technique, as it extracted truthful information. Interrogation should not be focused on one topic. Change the line of thought, and only a liar would stumble and contradict himself.

"Yes, so I manufactured a bomb using a military explosive called P4, a detonator and a timer. On the evening of the explosion, I attended a meeting at the hotel that was held in the lounge area. About one hundred members attended, which made the bar area too small, so the venue was moved to the lounge area.

During the meeting, I slipped outside and removed a canvas satchel containing the bomb from my car boot. I walked into the bar and ordered a double brandy and coke. While the barman had his back turned to me, facing the optics with brandy, I quietly lifted the lid and placed the bomb inside this seating area. The timer was set to go off in an hour's time. I doubted that the patrons would still be present as it was on a weekday, and normally, these meetings don't last for more than an hour or so. As for the barman, well, he's black anyway. I heard the following

day on the news that the hotel was bombed and that radical blacks were suspected."

"Whatever happened to the coloured girl he was having an affair with?" I asked. "I heard that after the affair surfaced and he was reprimanded, he killed this girl on the beach and disposed of the body. Nobody knows how the body was disposed of, and quite frankly, nobody cares," he said nonchalantly. "The only person who might know what happened to the girl's body is Jacques Van Tonder. He was employed as a chef at the hotel and had a very good relationship with the owner. I'm sure the owner might have confided in him. Jacques is extremely trustworthy, and I'm almost 100% sure he would know what happened to the body." I stood up from my chair to stretch my legs and consider all this new information. Now, I have a murder case to investigate, and I wondered how long this investigation would take.

"Hungry?" I asked and looked at Henry again. He nodded his head without saying a word. I called the tea lady to my office and asked her to buy two cheeseburgers and coke. "You are very fortunate that nobody was killed during this incident." I continued to pace around my office slowly, lost in my thoughts. Harry ravaged the burger and was done before I was halfway through. "Ok, so where can I find this Jacques Van Tonder?" I asked.

"Last I heard is that he ran away after the bombing and works as a chef at the Golf Course Casino in Windhoek, Namibia." Harry replied without hesitation.

I found the telephone number for the Golf Course Casino in Windhoek, so I decided to call them. A friendly receptionist answered my call, and I asked to speak to Jacques Van Tonder. She asked me to hold whilst an irritating tune played through my receiver. "Sorry for the delay, sir. Jacques is on rest days and will only be back at work on Friday." I thanked her and replaced the receiver.

Two days later, I was on a flight to Windhoek. On my arrival at Windhoek International Airport, I was met by the Namibian police. I was taken to a hotel that was pre-booked and told the policeman that he needed to take me to the casino the next day at ten am. The hotel had only two stars, and it showed. The basic

room consisted of a single bed, pedestal and lamp, but I was pleased to be there as I had never been to Windhoek before.

I spent the afternoon sightseeing and enjoyed a few Tafel lagers in a dimly lit bar. The following day, at exactly ten am, a detective vehicle with two detectives stood waiting for me in front of the hotel. I was taken to the casino, and the two detectives accompanied me inside to conduct the interview. The receptionist called Jacques to the front desk while the detectives and I sat on comfortable sofas, paging through the casino brochure.

Jacques arrived at the reception, and I noticed the blood drain from his face when he saw us and realised we were cops. He tried to maintain his composure as he introduced himself to us. I asked if there was somewhere private we could talk, and he suggested we go to the boardroom. I decided to stand whilst he sat before speaking. (Another interviewing technique) “Jacques, I’m going to get straight to the point. You were previously employed at the Munster Hotel?” I put it to him rather than ask him.

He looked up at me, puzzled at the question, but nodded his head in agreement. “Why did you leave?” I asked, now taking notes with my writing pad in hand.

“Aah, well, the pay was not that good, and I received this offer, which I couldn’t turn down.”

I sensed that Jacques was becoming defensive in his answers. ‘’Jacques, you were employed at the time of the explosion.” I put it to him again.

By now, Jacques had his head in both hands and exhaled slowly. Now he knew the reason for my visit, and I now had to turn up the heat. “So you’ve been here, in Namibia, for six months or so?” I inquired, knowing that my calculations since the bomb explosion were spot on. He just nodded in agreement. “Have you been in trouble with the law since you’ve been here?”

He looked up at me, and I knew what he was thinking. That he was going to be arrested and detained in a notorious police cell, where he would be the only white detainee and possibly endure the most gruesome torture imaginable. He sat looking at me for a while longer before shaking his head.

“You see, Jacques, let me explain the reason for my flying to Windhoek and the shit you’re in. Either I arrest you and

propose bail, or I have you remanded in custody to appear in court in Durban, a process that will take about three months due to the red tape in arranging an extradition order. This would mean you would lose your job and leave your family destitute. Or you could give me a detailed statement regarding the bomb explosion. I think it's a no-brainer. What do you say?"

"Oh hell no, I'll cooperate in any way possible. Just tell me what you need to know," he replied without hesitation.

"What happened to the coloured girl Dirk was having an affair with?" I got straight to the point.

He looked up again at me, thinking for a while before answering. I think he wondered how much I already knew and didn't want to risk lying to me. "In an effort to make this problem disappear, Dirk took this coloured girl, whose name was Monique, to the beach that they frequented for a `quickie.' Whilst on the beach, he strangled her to death. Dirk told me that her pregnancy complicated the affair. Dirk not only betrayed the organisation but also his wife of thirty years. Dirk told me that he took her body to the lagoon, where he travelled upstream in his barge before dumping her body into the murky waters. He had tied a cinder block to her neck and hoped the sharks would dispose of the body before she was recovered."

Jacques further said that he helped Dirk construct a pipe bomb. He wanted to blow up the bridge that crossed the Mvume River, which was also the border between South Africa and the Transkei.

One dark night Dirk drove to the bridge and placed the pipe bomb under the bridge. The bomb detonated an hour later, but didn't have enough force to bring the bridge down. A side strut was slightly damaged, but the bridge was well-reinforced and didn't collapse. Dirk tried to bring the bridge down to satisfy the organisation's top structure, that although he had made a mistake in having an affair with the coloured girl, he was still committed to the cause.

When Jacques had told me all he knew and was sure his involvement was not sufficient to constitute an arrest, I offered him a cigarette, which he gladly accepted. I studied my notes for a while, and was satisfied that he had given me his full cooperation.

I told him not to leave Windhoek before contacting me. I would present this information to the Director of Public Prosecutions, who would make a decision on his culpability. He was not off the hook just yet, and the next time he saw me, I would be in possession of a warrant for his arrest. The two Namibian detectives and I left, leaving Jacques pale-faced and in shock.

Over the next three months, I arrested all six of the members who were involved in the attack at the police station. One of the arrested members was a prominent businessman who agreed to testify against the others, and in return, he could plea bargain for a lesser sentence. I was at a holiday resort with this co-accused for three full days and obtained an affidavit from him that was over three hundred and fifty pages long. He and his family were placed in a witness protection program, as his evidence was vital. When I approached the Director of Public Prosecutions with all the evidence I had obtained against them, with the exception of the evidence against them of the attack on the police station, as it fell outside of their jurisdiction, it was decided that charges of attempted treason, attempted murder, malicious damage to property, using an explosive device and possession of a firearm, should be brought against them. As a non-commissioned officer, I was not permitted to investigate cases of such a serious nature, and even though I had completed the investigation, the matter should be handed to a more senior officer to deal with from then on.

Over the next two years, I completed my investigation of the five members, who had fled all over the country by then. I arrested them, and they stood trial in Umtata High Court for another two years. Their attorney tried every trick in the book to fight for his clients, and when they were finally convicted, and before sentencing, they applied for political amnesty from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission for this and any other politically motivated case against them.

I had served in the Violent Crime Investigation Unit for only a few years when my telephone rang. The lady at the other end told me that she was calling from the district commissioner's office and that the colonel wanted to see me immediately. I nervously

drove to the commissioner's office, frantically wondering what I had done this time. The commissioner did not invite members to his office unless in a crisis. The lady gave me a time for our meeting, which was only scheduled for thirty minutes. The commissioner had a reputation for being prompt, as his busy schedule did not allow him to wait. I walked down the airy corridor until I reached his office. I stood behind a closed door and heard him talking on the telephone. When it became quiet, I knocked gently on his door. He commanded me to enter, which I did sheepishly. He glared at me over his gold-framed glasses and ordered me to sit.

"I have received orders from the provincial commissioner to transfer you to the Murder and Robbery unit. As you might be aware, Warrant Officer Jonker committed suicide last week, and the post needs to be filled immediately. It has come to my attention that you successfully investigated politically motivated matters and right-wing offenders."

This offer was an instruction and was not negotiable. I would start at the Murder and Robbery Unit in two weeks, which was on the first of January. He proudly instructed that I would investigate Murder of `Victims with Status', in other words, on whites, and rape on ladies older than sixty years, he explained, and I was dismissed. It was quite a tough mandate, I thought, but I was up to the challenge.

My commander summoned me to his office, where he instructed me to go to Doonside Police Station. Almost an entire family had been killed, leaving only the wife in critical condition in Kingsway Hospital. I needed to sign for the docket and investigate. I excitedly drove on the N2 freeway towards Durban. This was my first case at my new unit, and I needed to solve it at all costs. If I failed, not only would I disappoint my district commissioner, but I would also disappoint myself.

I walked into the charge office and signed for the docket. I read the opening statement and discovered that Sergeant B.H Naidoo had visited the crime scene. Fortunately, he was still on shift and was summoned to the charge office. Sergeant Naidoo explained that a silver BMW with a GP registration was travelling on the N2 freeway from the south coast towards Durban when the vehicle veered off the road and collided with the concrete barrier between the north and southbound freeways. The male

driver and three female occupants died instantly, and another woman occupant was rushed to hospital, where she was admitted in a critical but stable condition. I walked to my car, wondering if this lady was able to speak. I needed to know exactly what happened and wondered why I needed to investigate motor vehicle accidents.

I was directed to a female ward where a pretty lady lay. She had pipes in her nose and was on a drip. Her eyes were swollen, and her badly cut face was bandaged. I walked closer to her bed and noticed her eyes following me. She blinked a few times, trying to focus. I bent closer to her and gently introduced myself. She tried to talk, but her words were mumbled. A nurse who was attending to her drips and life support, spoke from behind me. “I think she wants to know about her girls.” I wasn’t sure what to tell her, but I suspected they had died in the accident. “I will let you know when I know more,” I replied, not knowing how to break the news. I promised to visit her again the following day and excused myself. I needed to inspect the BMW and knew from my earlier discussion with Sergeant Naidoo, that it was impounded at Doonside SAP13.

The vehicle was smashed in the front as it collided with the concrete barrier. The windscreen was smashed, which I suspected was caused by the impact. All did not sit well with me though. The driver and passenger were strapped inside the vehicle with seat belts, but most of the windscreen was inside the car. Whilst looking for clues in the blood-stained car, I saw a rock on the floor behind the passenger seat. I needed to talk to Sergeant Naidoo again. This did not make sense. I hurried back to the charge office, where I found Sergeant Naidoo doing the “handing over” as his shift was complete.

“Sergeant Naidoo,” I called out. “What was the cause of this accident?” He looked at me, agitated that I was questioning him when he should already be off duty. “I don’t know. Maybe the driver was drunk or driving too fast.” He replied haphazardly in his heavy Durban South Indian accent. “So what’s with the rock on the floor behind the passenger seat?” I asked. Sergeant Naidoo might have felt that I was implying he did not perform his duties properly and was reluctant to answer any further questions. “You’re the investigating officer, not me.” He replied over his shoulder as he walked out of the charge office.

The following day, I went to Kingsway Hospital again. I hoped the lady could talk. There was a lot I needed to know. I just hoped that she wouldn't ask me about her girls. My mind raced as I thought of ways to answer. She smiled as I walked into the ward. I could hardly believe how much she had recovered. She was off life support, and her face was less swollen. She greeted me out of the corner of her mouth, and I could now hear what she was saying. I asked her to tell me what happened. Before she spoke, she asked me to help her take a sip of water, which I did.

"My husband, our two daughters, Stephany and Jenny, and their friend, Britney, were on holiday in Margate for two weeks. On New Year's Eve we left Margate at about eight that evening. My husband, Dave, drove as we were meeting friends in Balito at midnight. The girls were excited to see the fireworks display at midnight. We travelled along the freeway and were in good spirits as we sang along to songs on the radio. As we passed under an overhead bridge, we heard a loud noise as the windscreen shattered in front of us. I looked at my husband and noticed that he had been decapitated. Instinctively, and in shock, I heard Stephany scream in horror, but I did not look backwards. Instead, I grabbed hold of the steering wheel and tried to control our vehicle. The vehicle headed off the freeway, and I tried to control it, but we were traveling too fast. The vehicle collided with the concrete barrier. Fortunately, the airbags inflated, which saved my life. My husband died instantly, and Stephany cried loudly in terror. I looked back, and her father's decapitated head lay next to her on the seat. She was shaking her sister and friend trying to get them to respond, but her attempts were in vain. I noticed their heads were slumped forward, and I realised that both had died." Whilst reliving her ordeal she hesitated several times either to wipe her eyes or to regain her composure. I felt saddened and angry that innocent lives were lost in this manner. I had no doubt that a rock was thrown from the top of the bridge, which caused this carnage. I needed to find this shithead and deal with him, I thought angrily. I excused myself and told her to get some rest. I had work to do.

It was the start of a brand-new year. I received a call about a murder that had been committed in a well-known coastal town. On my arrival on site, I noticed that a five-story block of flats was

being constructed on the beachfront. Construction had come to a halt because of the December holidays, and the building was merely a concrete shell. The local detective led me to the lift shaft, where we came across a partially decomposing body of a young man, possibly in his late teens. He was well dressed in trousers and a neat shirt, not swimming trunks, as most young holidaymakers live in whilst on holiday. It was clear that he had fallen from the top floor into this open cavity which was the lift shaft. His body was removed to the mortuary. It was determined that he had died from the fall, and no other injuries were visible on his body. We performed a blood alcohol test on the victim and discovered that the alcohol level in his blood was extremely high. The parents of this young man later visited me, and they told me that they had come from a small town in the Free State to identify their son's body. They had received a telephone call from one of his friends that he had fallen down the shaft and had died. The father explained, only because the mother was too distraught, that their son had come on holiday with four of his friends. They were celebrating that they had passed matric and intended to spend the entire holiday in this holiday town before starting university the following year. The father explained that one friend contacted them in the early hours of New Year's Day and told him they were having a party at the top of this building. The view from up there was spectacular. They had too much to drink, and their son had accidentally fallen down the shaft. I obtained the names of his friends, who by that time had cut their holiday short and had gone back home.

I proceeded to the Free State town and managed to trace the friends, who all told me the same story; they all had too much to drink as they were celebrating the end of their schooling and welcoming the new year when the deceased accidentally fell down the shaft.

Their version of events seemed plausible, and there didn't appear to be any other witness who could confirm or contradict their version, so I decided to prepare an inquest docket into the accidental and unnatural death of this young man when a young lady contacted me. She told me that she couldn't sleep at night as her conscience was worrying her. She told me that she had met the five boys on the beach earlier that day, and they decided that they would get together that evening for a New Year's Eve

party on the beach. She met them on the beach as planned, and they started to party. It was nearly midnight when one of them suggested they have a party at the top of the incomplete building. They imagined that the view from up there would be stunning and that the fireworks display would be spectacular. At midnight, they heard the countdown on the beach, and the fireworks were set off. In a drunken stupor, they hugged each other and wished each other a Happy New Year. One of the guys said that she was his girlfriend and that the other guys were getting far too familiar with her, which broke out into an argument. They started pushing and shoving each other until one of them pushed the deceased in the face, which caused him to fall backwards down the shaft. She was very distraught and immediately left their company and went home.

I telephoned the parents of the boys and told them to be in my office the following morning, as there had been new developments in the case. The following morning the four boys and their parents arrived in my office, and I made them take a seat. I asked the boys if they knew a girl, and I mentioned her by name. All four boys turned white in the face from shock. I didn't continue to tell them what I had been told, but I asked them if they wanted to tell me what had actually happened.

They couldn't speak over themselves fast enough and corroborated everything I had been told. I charged the four boys with murder, and they were released into the custody of their parents. The case was remanded for further investigation, pending the autopsy report. At their next appearance, only three boys appeared before the court. They handed the magistrate documents that accused number one, and also, the main accused in the matter, had committed suicide.

During the same holiday and in the same coastal town, a teenage girl was found dead in the bed at a rented chalet. I proceeded to the chalet to find the mother and father very distraught about their daughter's passing. The deceased was lying on her back on the bed and was covered in a bed sheet. I moved the bed sheet off the body and noticed her nightgown had been pulled up, exposing her panties. I questioned her parents, who told me that their daughter had been out with some friends the night before and had returned home around ten. It was obvious that she had been drinking, as teenagers do, but she

wasn't drunk. She kissed them goodnight and went to bed. They discovered her lifeless body in her bed the following morning.

Her body was taken to the local mortuary, where a thorough examination was performed on her. Her throat was examined for a possible blockage, but nothing was found. Her arms were examined for possible drug overdose, but that, too, came up negative. It was found that her eyes were bloodshot, which is an indication of strangulation. There were no strangulation marks around her neck. I came to the conclusion that she had been suffocated. There was no evidence of sexual intercourse, but there were small lacerations in and around her vagina, which I thought were caused by someone with long fingernails. I noticed a bite mark on her left breast, so I requested the pathologist remove her breast carefully and fill it with silicone, which he did. The breast was packed in ice and rushed to the forensic lab. Fingernail scrapings were also obtained and forwarded to the forensic lab.

I proceeded back to the parents and questioned them about the deceased. This time, I had a closer look at them. The lady was in her mid-forties; she was huge. Her personal hygiene needed some urgent attention. Her hair was shoulder-length and very untidy. Her oral hygiene was disgusting. I wondered when she had last brushed her teeth, so I stood a distance away when speaking to them. Her husband wasn't any better. He was dirty and smelled of stale cigarette smoke and rotten beer. He was as big as she was. His toenails were long and filthy. I looked at his fingernails and noticed they weren't any better. From what I could see, he had a full mouth of teeth. After questioning them, I established that she was the biological mother of the girl, and he was the stepfather of the deceased girl, whose name was Milarnie. She was sixteen and attending school. I asked the mother to please accompany me to my office as some procedural documents needed to be completed. At my office, I offered her a cup of coffee, which she declined but said jokingly that a brandy and Coke would be nice. I asked her about the previous evening and wanted her to tell me in detail how it unfolded. She explained that her husband. Sarel made a fire, and they had a braai at around seven. It was their first evening on holiday, so they were celebrating. They had saved all year to come on holiday. She said that she didn't work and that her husband worked at the mine in

Westonaria, where they also lived. At about eight that evening Milarnie went out with some boys she had met earlier that day. She thinks they went to the beach. She and her husband stayed behind at the chalet, enjoying maybe a few too many drinks. They had waited for Milarnie to get back before they went to bed. Milarnie slept in her own room, whilst she and her husband shared another. They woke up the following morning, quite hungover, and her husband went to the kitchen to pour them a drink. He found it strange that Milarnie was still in her room as it was nearly nine o'clock by that time, so he opened her door to wake her up only to find her dead on her bed. I asked her if her husband left the bedroom at any stage during the night, but she could not answer as she said she had too much to drink and passed out. I asked her about the relationship between her husband and her daughter. She thought for a moment and then said; "Well, as you know, Sarel is Milarnie's stepfather. So their relationship was only okay. I asked her if she thought Sarel had any sexual inclinations towards Milarnie. She outright shook her head but said that he would smack her on the bum sometimes as she walked past him. At first, she thought it was normal, and that's what fathers do to their daughters. She thought again and said that she noticed that he would often wrap his arms around her and laugh. She thought that this, too, was normal behaviour and that he was just being affectionate, but now that she's thinking about it, it was a bit strange. He did that at every opportunity. He knew Milarnie didn't like it and often pushed him away, and he would just laugh. She recalled that once, Milarnie was in the bath. The door was closed. He rushed in anyway and saw her lying naked in the bath. He apologised, turned around, and closed the door. When she confronted him about that, he said that he urgently needed to pee. She told him that the door was closed and he should have knocked. Also, he knew that Milarnie was in the bath as they could hear her running a bath whilst they were drinking brandy in the lounge. He just laughed and shrugged it off. It was time to question Sarel.

I took the mother back to the chalet, and on our arrival there, I noticed Sarel seated under the trees, drinking his brandy and coke. He was dressed in rugby shorts and a tee shirt that was too small for him as it barely covered his oversized belly. I walked up to him and asked him to accompany me to my office, as there

were a few questions I needed to ask him pertaining to Milarnie's death. He stood up from his chair and replied that if I had any questions, I could ask him right there. I said that I did not want to embarrass him and that it would be in his best interest to come with me to my office. Sarel replied, in a drunken tone, that he was on holiday, that he had paid for the use of this chalet and that he wasn't going anywhere. I could say whatever I wanted right there. Sarel had had a few Brandies and Coke and thought he was bulletproof. I walked up to him and punched him so hard that his head fell backwards. He stumbled a few times, but before he could gain his composure, I punched him again, landing my punch on his jaw. Sarel stumbled backwards, and I grabbed him and forced him to the ground with his head in the dirt. I managed, after a struggle, to handcuff his hands behind his back, which I put on extra tight so that all circulation would be cut off to his hands. As I stood up, I could feel my heart pounding in my chest, and I gasped for air for a while. I left him on the ground in his drunken stupor, bleeding from the nose. He started shouting that this arrest was unlawful; that I had assaulted him, and that he was going to sue me. I took no notice, pulled him to his feet and placed him in the back of my vehicle.

On my arrival at my office, Sarel was still protesting about the arrest, trying to get as much attention as he could. I led him by the arm to my office and pushed him onto a chair. I was so angry at his attitude and total disrespect that I grabbed him by the front of his tee shirt and put my face close to his, and said; "Listen here, you fat fuck. Not you or anyone speaks to me like that. Now calm down and tell me about last night and what happened between you and Milarnie." He glared at me for a few moments before spitting in my face. I smelt the sour, slimy sliver on my face, which infuriated me but also made me want to puke. I held my breath and walked out of my office, fuming mad. I went to the gents and washed my face. This fat prick had really pissed me off. I walked into the field member's office. These were members who performed intelligence gathering. Three members were seated around a desk, chatting about a case they were investigating and how they planned to apprehend the perpetrator. By this time, I was in a foul mood, and we needed to bring Sarel to his knees. I instructed the three members to follow me to my office, where Sarel waited. The three detectives

followed me to find Sarel seated with his hand still cuffed behind his back. “Gents, this is Mr Sarel. He likes young girls, especially his own daughter. He liked her so much that he tried to rape her and then killed her. Mr Sarel is on holiday, and I’m sure he would love you to take him on a sightseeing expedition.” I told the experienced detectives.

“Oh, Okay,” said one detective, in a thick Zulu accent. “Mr Sarel. You will have to come with us. We can see you are on holiday. We think we must show you the location where we black people live. Come with us.” They pulled him up from his chair, and Sarel started protesting, but these members insisted he come with them. They led him out of my office and into the parking lot, where they forced him into their undercover minibus and sped off.

About three hours later, they returned to my office. They sat Sarel down in the chair he had been in previously, and the one detective said, “Sir, Mr Sarel has something to tell you.” I looked up, stopped writing, and said, “Yes, what would you like to tell me, Sarel?” Sarel looked exhausted. His clothes were tatty, and his face was dirty and sweaty. He was ready to talk. The detectives stood on either side of him with their arms folded. They listened whilst he spoke. “I killed Milarnie.” He said, looking down at the floor. I nodded that I was listening and that he should carry on. “I wanted to rape her, but she fought me off. I managed to reach between her legs and put two fingers inside her. While she was kicking, I lay on top of her to separate her legs and used my weight to keep her down, but she didn’t stop fighting, so I bit her on the breast and hoped the pain would shut her up, but it didn’t so I suffocated her with a pillow. Sarel started to cry, maybe not out of remorse but knowing that he had been caught and was confessing to the murder. “I put a pillow over her face and suffocated her. I was drunk, okay. I didn’t know what I was doing.”

I took Sarel to the district surgeon and requested a plaster mould be made of his teeth, mainly the incisors. I also obtained nail scraping from him and a blood sample. I forwarded the mould to the forensic lab and asked for a comparison between the teeth and the bite mark on the breast, which came back as a positive match. DNA testing was performed with the nail scraping from Milarnie and came up positive when compared to his blood.

Nail scrapings taken from Sarel came up positive when a DNA comparison was performed on Milarnie's blood. After appearing in court, Sarel pleaded guilty to murdering Milarnie and the matter was transferred to the High Court for sentencing. Sarel received a life sentence of twenty-five years for the murder of his stepdaughter. The comparison between the teeth and the bite mark, used to identify a perpetrator, made this the first case in South Africa where a successful prosecution was concluded on teeth impressions.

A few weeks had passed since the motor vehicle incident on the N2, and no information had been received regarding the perpetrators. My commander told me that a registered informer had told him that the principal of Thula-Thula Secondary was in possession of an unlicensed 9mm pistol. He realised that this information might not be relevant to any murder investigation in the area, but if I found the firearm, I could use it as leverage to obtain information. I thought this unorthodox manner of obtaining information was strange, but I was learning. Later that evening, my team of detectives and I were at Thula-Thula Secondary School. At the rear of the school building stood a simple and partially dilapidated face brick house. We knocked on the front door as we heard the television on in the background. A middle-aged, well-spoken man opened the front door with a friendly smile. He dropped his smile when he realised that we were police officers. "Mr Dlamini," I said. "We are from the Murder and Robbery unit. I don't want to waste your time or embarrass you in front of your family, and I know you will cooperate with us." He stood in front of the open door just out of earshot from his family inside. He smiled and nodded his head in agreement. "I want the unlicensed 9mm firearm, and I'm giving you the opportunity to hand it over to us. If you don't and we search your house and find it, I will arrest you." It only took a few seconds for him to weigh up his options, then returned to his home and minutes later came outside and produced a 9mm pistol from under his jacket. "Good," I said as I took possession of the unlicensed firearm. "Today is Wednesday. Next week Wednesday, I'm coming to arrest you for this firearm. But if you tell me who threw a rock over the freeway bridge on New Year's Eve, I will let you go. Understood?" We left a visibly shaken school principal and hurried back to our vehicles.

The following Wednesday, my detectives and I returned to pay Mr Dlamini a visit. On our arrival at the school, we noticed Mr Dlamini exit the school building and hurry over to where we had parked. He greeted and spoke to me with his back to the school building. “I have done what you asked,” he said politely. “I have a grade six learner and his grandmother in my office. Muzi Dube confessed to me that he was the one who threw the rock off the bridge. I asked that his grandmother be present during your interview.

We followed Mr Dlamini to his small but neat office, and I was shocked when I saw Muzi Dube. His grandmother bowed respectfully as we walked into the office. This boy was only about fourteen years old. He sat next to his grandmother, looking down at the floor. His grey trousers were too short for his long, skinny legs, and his white shirt was tatty and well-worn. I could hardly believe that this boy had caused so much hurt, so much loss, and so much destruction. Mr Dlamini moved to his chair behind his desk and offered us a seat on a wooden bench against the wall. In a traditional Zulu manner, he introduced the grandmother to us and told her where we were from and the reason for our visit. She remained seated with a blue scotch blanket around her waist and over her knees and nodded at the school principal as he spoke.

“Muzi is a learner at this school and is a well-mannered and obedient boy. I will let him tell you what happened on that fateful day.” Mr Dlamini said as he headed the meeting.

“Come on, talk boy,” the grandmother said as she bumped him with her elbow.

The boy, still looking down at the floor, slowly started to speak. ”It was a mistake,” he said quietly, not being able to lift his eyes. “Mazwe told me that we could get money. He wanted to take me to the shebeen.”

I heard the grandmother clear her throat as she stared at the boy. She wanted to say something to the boy, but Mr Dlamini waved at her not to interrupt. “What did you do, Muzi? You must tell the truth,” Mr Dlamini said sternly.

“Mazwe said that if we drop a rock on a passing car, the driver would stop his car to inspect the damage. We could then rob him, and Mazwe would take me to the shebeen. I did not

know somebody would get hurt. We just wanted them to stop so we could rob them. That's all."

Had the young man told me that they intended to rob because of their impoverished upbringing and they needed money to feed their siblings, it might have come as less of a shock. But to want to rob people to have a good time at a shebeen just didn't make any sense. Muzi continued that Mazwe was also a learner at this school and they were in the same grade and class. Mr Dlamini confirmed that Mazwe Zondo did attend this school. He voiced his disappointment that Muzi was friends with what he called a troublemaker.

Mr Dlamini left us in his office and later returned with another boy, who he introduced to us as Mazwe Zondo. He walked into his office whilst dragging the young boy by the arm. We thanked Mr Dlamini for his assistance and left with the two boys in handcuffs.

We placed the two fourteen-year-old boys in our vehicle and headed for our office. Whilst travelling along the N2 freeway, we passed under the bridge where the two boys had committed this heinous crime. My stomach churned when I thought of the terrifying moments the Van Dyke's experienced. A moment in time that changed their lives forever.

At the office, my commander showed no sympathy. He was disgusted that two juveniles could commit such a crime. He was disgusted by their behaviour and instructed me to detain them in a cell for juveniles. The two boys pointed out the crime scene and made a full confession.

The public prosecutor could not prove intent, so both boys were convicted of culpable homicide and sentenced to fifteen and twenty years, respectively.

I received a call one morning of a possible murder in a small coastal town. The victim was an elderly man. I proceeded to the beachfront home in an upmarket area, where I was introduced to the maid, Miriam, who told me that she had been working for the deceased for the past thirty years. She arrived at work that morning, as she only worked twice weekly and found him lying on the bathroom floor. She walked me through the house until we came to the main bedroom with an en-suite bathroom. He lay on the bathroom floor, and it was obvious that he was dead. I

looked around his room, which was fairly neat, except for the bed he had slept on. I examined the body and noticed that he had sustained a small abrasion on the left side of his head, adjacent to his temple. At first, I assumed that he had fallen during the night when going to the bathroom, and had knocked his head on the side of the bath, but there were no visible blood smears on the side of the bath or anywhere in the bathroom. Miriam claimed that her employer was Hans Schroder, age seventy-four years. I looked around the house for a point of entry but couldn't find one. I was convinced that there was no forced entry into the house. I asked Miriam if she could establish if anything had been taken. She looked through his belongings and told me that nothing had been taken.

During the post-mortem, a projectile of a .22 calibre firearm was found in his brain, and it was determined to be the cause of death. It was also determined that he had lacerations to his chest and back and that these lacerations were about a month old. Something told me to remove the stomach and its contents and send it to the forensic lab for analysis.

During my enquiries, I determined that the deceased's wife had passed away a few years prior and that they had no surviving children. Their only son passed away from a heart attack about two years earlier. I entered his identity number into the firearm register, a computer program designed to provide licenced firearm particulars and their owners. I determined that Mr Hans Schroder was the licence holder of a .22 calibre pistol. I thought about it and found it strange that the maid had gone through his personal belongings and never discovered that his licenced firearm was missing.

The house was large—too large for just a single person to live in—with a full-size swimming pool and tennis courts. The double-story house consisted of five bedrooms, four bathrooms, two lounges, a very large kitchen with a separate pantry and scullery, and a triple garage that overlooked the main swimming beach. This house was huge, I thought.

Miriam claimed that she lived in the servant's quarters, and her boss wanted it that way in case he needed her during the night. She claimed that she had a key to the back door. I asked her if he had any visitors lately, and she replied that his brother-in-law on his late wife's side and wife had come to visit and had

spent a week here on holiday. She only knew him as Piet from Orkney.

At this point, Miriam seemed to be the only suspect, but she was elderly herself, and I couldn't imagine her killing her employer, who she had worked for, for so many years. I questioned Miriam about the laceration on his body, and she told me that he had fallen into a Bougainvillea whilst trimming it about a month ago. She claimed that he didn't want to go to hospital, so she treated him at home.

In spite of receiving information that the deceased entertained prostitutes at his home, there was just no other information to work with.

About a month later, members of the field unit reported to me that they had received information that the deceased had been badly assaulted in a rural village where he had lived with Miriam. I instructed them to bring Miriam to me for questioning.

Miriam sat at my desk while I took notes. When asked about the lacerations to the deceased's body, she admitted to lying to me. She told me that when Mrs Schroder died from cancer, Mr Schroder was very upset. They had been married for about forty years. She would sit with him at night and console him. She would make him tea, and at one point, she explained, he didn't look after himself, and she would bath him and shave him. Eventually, they fell in love. She told him that this house was too big for him to live in and suggested that he move in with her at her two-roomed mud house, and he agreed. Within a month of staying with Miriam, he agreed to change his will. He had no children, and his wife had passed away, so he left his entire estate to the SPCA, and he now agreed to make Miriam the sole beneficiary of all he owned. They caught a taxi to Durban, where they went to Mr Hans's lawyers, who drafted a new will that made Miriam the sole beneficiary of his estate.

Miriam agreed that a few weeks later, she arranged for two young men to break into her house and kill Mr Hans as she wanted to benefit from his estate. She agreed to pay them each one hundred rand.

One night, whilst Mr Hans was asleep in their bed, the two boys came to her house. They were both drunk, and each carried a quart bottle of beer. They came through the front door, which Miriam had left open for them and walked into the bedroom

where they lay asleep. Both finished the last of the beer before one of them smashed the bottle against the end of the bed, breaking it into sharp edges. At the sound of the breaking glass, Mr Hans woke and sat up in bed. When he realised the danger they were in, he got out of bed and confronted the boy with the broken beer bottle. A fight ensued, and they struggled to the floor, where the younger man stabbed Mr Hans several times with the broken beer bottle. The other young man just stood there in shock, not knowing quite what to do. Fortunately, the men were too drunk, and Mr Hans managed to overpower his attackers before they ran away. Mr Hans was badly injured, but the lacerations weren't deep enough to cause serious damage. She treated him for a few weeks until he was strong enough. He told her that a location is not the kind of place for a white man to stay, as they would keep coming back to rob him, and that next time, he might not be so lucky. Not long thereafter, they moved back to his home.

My blood boiled when Miriam told me what had happened, but I knew without a complainant, there was nothing I could do. Miriam maintained that even though she was the sole beneficiary of his estate, she had nothing to do with his death.

A few days later, the results of the toxicology report were received. Small traces of cyanide were discovered in the deceased's gut. I found that very interesting and wondered who could have access to cyanide. After all, it wasn't the kind of thing one could buy at a pharmacy. I did some research and established that cyanide is used in the extraction of gold in the mines.

I had to find the deceased's brother-in-law, only known as Piet after Miriam claimed that he lived in Orkney, which is a mining town. I went back to the deceased's home and asked Miriam if the deceased had a personal diary in which he kept personal telephone numbers. She said that he did, and it stayed next to the telephone. I opened the diary, which was in alphabetical order and paged to P for Piet. I came across the name Piet Van Staaden with a number starting with the dialling code 018, which I already knew was Orkney's dialling code as I had already looked into it. I recorded the number in my investigation diary and went back to my office. At my office, I entered the number into my computer, and it came up as Dutch Reformed Church, Orkney. I decided to dial the number, and a

friendly Afrikaans-speaking lady answered my call. I asked if I could speak with Mr Piet Van Staaden, and she corrected me, saying Pastor Piet Van Staaden, to which I apologised. She said that he was not in, but if it was a family emergency, I could contact him on his home telephone. I assured her that this was a family emergency and that I desperately needed to speak with him. She gave me his home telephone number, which I recorded. I thanked her and replaced the receiver. I entered the telephone number into my computer, and it gave me the name of P.S. Van Staaden and his address. I decided not to call him but rather to pay him a visit.

On my arrival in Orkney the following day I went to the Magistrates office with my search warrant. I met the prosecutor, told him the reason for my visit, and asked if he would authorise my search warrant, which he did. I didn't think that the prosecutor attended the Dutch Reformed Church because he wouldn't be welcomed there because of his race. The prosecutor then asked me to wait in his office for a few minutes as he would take it to the magistrate to also authorise. I waited in his office and looked around. I wondered whether the previous government, who built these offices, had a blueprint for magistrates courts, magistrates officers and prosecutors' offices in small towns as they all looked exactly the same. The prosecutor returned a short while later and smiled as he handed me the search warrant. I returned the smile and left. Offices like these always gave me the creeps.

I arrived at Piet Van Staaden's address and parked my vehicle outside on the gravel road. I opened the small gate and walked towards the house. Before I reached the front door, it suddenly opened, and a skinny man in his late fifties stood in the doorway. He was smiling with his hand outstretched to greet me. "Good afternoon he said, still smiling. My name is Piet Van Staaden, and to what do I owe this pleasure?"

"Good afternoon," I replied and introduced myself. Suddenly, a frown developed on his forehead, and he said, "Please come in and take a seat." As I was about to make myself comfortable, his wife appeared. She was a pleasant lady, who offered me a cup of tea. I was rather thirsty, so I took her up on her offer. Mr Piet Van Staaden sat back in his chair and stroked his beard. "How can I be of assistance, detective?" he asked,

staring me in the eye. “I’m investigating the murder of your brother-in-law, Mr Hans Schroder.”

“Murder?” he interrupted. “I heard he fell in the bathroom and died from his injuries.” Just then, his wife came in carrying a tray with a teapot, milk jug, sugar pot and a plate of biscuits, and placed them on the table between us, turned and left. I took a cup, poured tea, and started to sip.

“Yes, Mr Van Staaden. He was murdered, and I’m sure you can shed some light on his death.”

He looked at me quite confused, without replying. “Now, we can do it the easy way or the hard way. Either you cooperate and tell me everything I want to know, or I arrest you for murder right now and detain you right here in your town, where you are well known and respected, I’m sure, which will not only tarnish your reputation but also cost you your career. Understood?” I said in a tone of authority.

“No, I’ll help you in any possible way; we loved Hans and would do anything to help and to see the perpetrators being brought to book.” He replied.

“Now let me just warn you in advance, Mr Van Staaden, I have enough evidence to arrest and charge you with his murder. If you cooperate fully, I can ask for leniency on your behalf; if not, you will die a very old man in prison.” Again, he didn’t answer, but I noticed how he tried to swallow the lump in his throat.

“I know what you did,” I told him, “And I have a search warrant in my possession to search your house. Let me advise you, that there is no time limit on how long a search may take. If I decide to execute the search, I will turn your home upside down. I will continue searching until I find what I’m looking for. You will not sleep tonight because I will be in your bedroom turning everything upside down, or you can make it as pain-free as possible and just give me what I came to get. Do you understand?” I asked in an even tougher tone.

Again, he didn’t reply; he just shook his head. “Right, now that we understand each other, is the cyanide you received from one of the members of your congregation in the house or the garage,” I asked. He hesitated for a while, weighing up his options, then replied, “It’s in the garage.”

“Good, we’ll fetch it later. So good, so far. Where is Hans’s .22 pistol?”

He looked at me with fear in his eyes and broke out in tears. “How could he? We are family; we’ve always been so close. He just wanted to give the maid everything. Everything that belonged to my sister.”

I let him sob for a while. His wife joined him, sat on the armrest, and put her arms around him. She tried to comfort him but cried just as much.

“The pistol, please, Mr Van Staaden,” I said as I had to interrupt at some point. His wife stood up, wiping her eyes and blowing her nose. She walked to the bedroom and came back with the .22 calibre pistol belonging to Hans Schroder. I helped him to his feet and followed him out the back door and into the garage through the side door. On the floor covered in a tarpaulin, he pointed out the cyanide to me.

His wife was frantic. She didn’t want to let go of her husband’s arm. She spoke fast as she panicked. I asked her to please pack a small bag for her husband. I reassured her that when he appeared in court, I would not oppose bail. She could expect him back home in about a week.

She was instantly relieved and forced a faint smile out the side of her face. She let his arm go and rushed to the room to pack a small bag for her husband. By the time she returned, we were already at the car. She came running towards us carrying a small bag. She handed it to her husband, put her arms around his neck, and kissed him. He just smiled at her, trying not to cry, opened the passenger door, and climbed into the car. He waved to her as we drove off, leaving her with her hands covering her face.

“Why did you do it, Piet?” I asked as I drove.

He looked out of the side window and replied, “You know, the bible says you mustn’t hate, but I can’t think of another word to describe my feelings towards Hans. Dislike is not even an appropriate word. He was married to my sister for thirty-five years before she died of cancer, as I’m sure you know. Hans, even as a young man, always had eyes for other women and women liked Hans. Not only did he have a lot of money, but he was good-looking too. My sister spent many nights alone at home while he was out entertaining other women, but she lived in the lap of luxury. She had anything her heart desired, but she was lonely. When he was in his sixties, and had lost his charm, he turned to

prostitutes. He brought them home and slept with them in their bed, while my sister was instructed to sleep in the spare room. She used to phone me at least three times a week, in tears. I often said, although it goes against my beliefs as a Christian and a pastor, that she should leave him. She refused. I think deep down, she still loved him in spite of his behaviour. When she passed away, it took him a week to contact me. By that time, he had her body cremated and had scattered her ashes. There was no service; there were no friends to bid her farewell, nothing like that at all. I then found out later that he and that Miriam were having an affair, in the house while my sister was lying in bed dying from cancer.

"I tried to kill him using cyanide. A friend whose name I won't disclose told me that cyanide only kills if administered in small doses, so when we visited him over the holidays, I would put small doses of cyanide in his drink. He enjoyed drinking a glass or two of whiskey at night. He said it left him young. After a week, Hans was still alive, and I was getting desperate. One night, while he was standing at the toilet having a pee, I shot him on the side of his head with the pistol he had for many years. His assets didn't interest me other than I didn't want Miriam to inherit anything, and if she does, I will contest it in court."

My commander told me that a new college for advanced training was about to launch in Pretoria. The Commissioner of Police would unveil this training centre, and five FBI agents would conduct lectures on advanced investigation and training methods at this centre. He explained that fifteen detectives had been nominated countrywide to undergo this extensive training and that the provincial commissioner had nominated me. I could hardly believe what I had been told. The excitement of this prestigious nomination was far beyond any of my expectations. My commander explained that training would include criminal profiling, advanced crime scene investigation, basic forensic investigation, forensic pathology, investigation of Satanic activities and investigation of serial killers. He told me to report to the facility on Sunday and that the Commissioner of Police would introduce us to the FBI agents at eight o'clock on Monday morning, and he would personally conduct the opening ceremony.

The following morning, after breakfast, the Police Commissioner arrived, and we were told to gather in the lobby area. He was the first black Commissioner of Police, and he made sure that we understood that there would be rapid transformation within the police and that he was the "top dog." He made his way to the podium and addressed us. He told us about this facility and that it would only be used for specialised training. He introduced the FBI agents to us and flattered them by expressing his gratitude for their attendance. At four that afternoon, he would unveil a plaque and announce the naming of the facility. It was to be named the Thabo Mbeki Centre of advanced training. He then pointed to five smartly dressed men who were seated on the stage, thanked them again for their attendance, and hoped they would enjoy their stay in our beautiful country. These agents were aged between thirty and fifty years and wore dark suits. All were clean-shaven with neatly combed hair. The commissioner then handed the podium over to one of the agents, who appeared older than the rest. He stood up from his chair and walked over to the podium. He greeted us in his American twang and introduced himself as Special Agent John Jones from the FBI headquarters in Washington, DC. He told us that he would be overseeing all training and that we were welcome to come to him if we required anything. He expressed his delight in being here and hoped that they would be able to pass on their expertise and knowledge to us and that we would use the advanced methods in our daily duties as detectives. He said that he would test us on a weekly basis and that he would personally compile and mark the questionnaires. In closing, he told us that the pass mark was 80%, and if anybody failed, he would be dismissed from the course immediately and sent back to his unit with a report to their commander. In closing, he reminded us how privileged we were to have been nominated for this course. We had the privilege of chatting casually to the agents. It was interesting to hear what they had achieved and how it came about that they were nominated as lecturers. We enjoyed sharing stories and having a few drinks with them before the hard work started.

The commissioner had a small group of black detectives around him, and they spoke and laughed loudly, above the usual buzz of chatter coming from the other members. The

commissioner held an empty glass in one hand and turned to me and shouted, slurring slightly; "Hey you," and pointed to me. "Get me another whiskey." I had enjoyed a few drinks and found his behaviour distasteful, to say the least.

I pointed at myself and asked; "Me?" He just nodded his head in reply. I walked over to the commissioner, took his glass from him with a smile, and walked to the bar area. The barman poured another whiskey and handed me the glass. Not only did I suffer humiliation, but I felt quite ashamed that our commissioner would act in this manner. I suddenly felt the urge for revenge, so I lowered his glass to my pants zip and pulled out my dick and dipped it, which brought a smile to my face. I replaced my dick. I walked casually back to the commissioner and handed him his drink, which he accepted without a hint of gratitude. He brought the glass to his mouth and took a sip; I couldn't stop myself from chuckling out loud.

Our first lesson was on criminal profiling. Our lecturer was very experienced in that field, and he went to great lengths to explain profiling in detail. He was rushed for time, but he managed to cover a large portion of the scope of profiling. This lecture was intense, and there were few smoke breaks. I realised, just by the volume of work covered thus far, that a lot of hard work would be required to accomplish the desired pass rate. We broke for lunch, and after lunch, we took our places at our desks. Lectures continued until four o'clock that afternoon with another lecturer whose field of expertise was forensic pathology. We were handed a study manual on each topic, and we covered at least five chapters a day.

At 16:00, we rushed to the canteen in need of a stiff drink. Many attending detectives were either in their thirties or early forties. Studying had become foreign to us, either because we had completed all relevant studies years ago or because we were so dedicated that there was no time to study. We chatted over a drink, and all agreed that this was going to be a tough course to pass.

We completed a variety of subjects, including interrogation techniques, forensic crime scene investigation, and others. Every Friday, we were tested on the week's lectures. Everybody took their studies seriously, and nobody failed a single test. We knew that to pass, we had to study hard. Nobody

wanted to experience the embarrassment of being sent back to their unit with a report to their commander. The subjects were interesting, but I often wondered how practical it would be to apply these techniques in a third-world country. We knew all too well that criminals in this country couldn't be negotiated with. It is often difficult to reason with them because many have no conscience. Prison time is also not a threat. Many have spent time in prison before but treat prison as if it were a college. Many only live for today, and only what happens today matters. They didn't think of tomorrow or the long-term consequences of their actions.

We finally completed the course, and John Jones handed us certificates before congratulating us for successfully completing the course. I was happy to pass and knew that I would make my commander proud. Completing this course would also advance my career and stand me in good stead for promotion. News of my being trained by FBI agents quickly spread throughout the district, and I arrived at the unit to a hero's welcome. Everyone had a newfound respect for me, and whenever I walked into a police station, members would jump to attention. I had truly made my mark, and my attitude reflected my achievements.

I was summoned to a farm in the midlands, the same policing area where I had been stationed many years before. I immediately recognised the name of the victim as I had met him when investigating the murder of Mr Le Roux. Now, Mr McKenzie's [`Mack', de Haas, Mary (2001) **Unequal Protection**, p. 305.] son had been murdered on their farm, which was adjacent to the Sizabantu Store. I knew the area well and knew how hostile the community could be towards the police. I wondered if this murder was motivated by robbery or if the son was killed in an attempt to drive the father off his land. Never before in Kwa-Zulu Natal had a farmer been killed for his farm.

On my arrival at the farm, about five kilometres from the now demolished and vandalised Sizabantu Store, I met the local police detectives, who remembered me from when I served at this police station. They were waiting to hand the crime scene to a more senior detective. These detectives drove ahead of me and directed me to a gravel road behind the main farmhouse. This

gravel road led from the farmhouse and sheds to a portion of the farm situated next to the river on which the farmer was cultivating cabbages and tomatoes. I drove down a narrow gravel road. Thick bush lay on either side of the road, which covered the road in late afternoon shadows. I continued carefully down the road and needed to swerve at times to avoid rocks protruding above the road surface until I arrived at a Land Rover facing up the road towards the house. This Land Rover had come to a standstill when it collided with an embankment on the side of the road. I noticed that the Land Rover had been shot from the left side and was riddled with bullets. The hail of bullets had shattered the front windscreen and passenger windows. Inside the vehicle, seated behind the steering wheel, sat a young man slumped forward over the steering wheel, and he, too, had been riddled with bullets.

The local detective told me that he had interviewed the victim's father, who had told him that his son, James McKenzie, had worked in the tomato fields, next to the river and was returning home when he was ambushed. We searched the bush to the left of the vehicle and found fifteen spent AK47 cartridges where the attack took place. I searched the surrounding area and realised that the shooter had carefully chosen where to hide. The hideaway was situated in thick bush and was not visible from the small gravel road. The perpetrator must have waited for the victim for a long time as there were a number of flattened homemade cigarettes on the clearance on the ground. These cigarettes were rolled out of newspaper. No other clues could be found, and the prints in this clearing indicated that the perpetrator was barefoot.

The father of the deceased told me that he had nothing but trouble on his farm since he bought it ten years ago. He had used all his savings when he left Zimbabwe and wanted to start farming again, with tomatoes, cabbage and spinach. He told me some harrowing experiences he had during his time at the farm, and he described how the locals had vandalised his crops, stolen his equipment, and even poisoned his dogs. He believed that these were all attempts to get rid of him. He told me, over a cup of coffee, that he had experienced similar acts of vandalism in Zimbabwe and was forced to give up his farm there. He never thought that he would experience it all over again in this country,

and now, because he refused to abandon his farm, his only child paid the ultimate price. His wife, also in her sixties, sat with us in the lounge, but was soon overcome by grief and went to the bedroom to be alone.

Mr McKenzie fought back the tears, as he spoke and vowed to revenge his son's death. He told me that he had adequate military training in Rhodesia and had fought in the bush war. He retired as a senior officer after spending most of his life fighting a war. He vowed that he would stop at nothing until justice was done.

My heart went out to Mr and Mrs McKenzie. They had come to this country in search of a new and better life and had endured years of victimisation, and now they had lost their only child in the most horrific way imaginable. I advised Mr McKenzie not to take the law into his own hands. I also feared there might be reprisal from the locals if he dared declare war against them.

I sent my team into the area to gather information, but I knew from past experience, that obtaining information freely from this close-knit community was unlikely.

The local farmers, especially those who lived and farmed on "that" side of the main road, rallied together, and all agreed to do whatever was necessary to assist the investigation. They promised to speak to their farm workers and attempt to gather information. A sympathetic and very vocal farmer offered us a vacant house on his farm where we could stay and use as a base.

The regional commissioner called me and told me that information had been received that tensions were on the increase in the area and that locals were adamant about forcing all the farmers from their farms and taking back what they felt the whites had stolen from them. Farmers increased security and formed farm security. Private security was employed, and these guards would patrol the farms on a twenty-four basis. The private security was heavily armed, which also increased tensions between the farmers and the locals. He assigned twenty-five detectives to me to form a task team just to investigate this murder.

Over the next few weeks, potential suspects were questioned at the farm, which I jokingly named "*Vlakplaas*." My team and I followed up on every potential lead, but no positive or relevant information was forthcoming. Pressure mounted as

the case remained unsolved. My commander contacted me for progress reports on a weekly basis, and his frustrations grew as we continued to come up empty-handed.

After about a month of interviewing dozens of people, and detaining many suspects, I realised that we had to broaden our search. We were no closer to solving this murder than we were a month ago. Expectations grew, but I remained adamant that the perpetrators would be brought to book. We needed to apprehend the perpetrator before the farmers apprehended him. They would show no mercy, and we would have another murder on our hands. Also, if the farmers had gotten to him before we did, it would have ignited an already volatile situation. I now knew that the deceased's father was well-trained and had enough military background and support from other farmers to start a full-scale war.

Finally, a breakthrough came. Detectives at a neighbouring policing area reported to me that they had experienced a spate of taxi-related murders in their area, and they suspected a certain taxi boss of being behind these murders. This notorious taxi boss was known to hire out firearms to a criminal network that committed armed robberies and murders. We suspected that he might have hired out an AK47 assault rifle to someone in this community to kill the deceased. We couldn't just arrest this taxi boss and search his home for firearms. He was too smart to store the firearms at his house. I also knew that he was too smart to confess, so I needed to devise a plan to get him to reveal where the firearms were kept.

That night, I came up with an idea. Thinking back on that night, I realise now that this was the most stupid, most daring idea ever, but in my defence, I was intoxicated at the time. I discussed my idea with my team. The more sober detectives shook their heads in disagreement and chatted between themselves that it was a suicidal plan, but they could not come up with a counter idea that was better than mine. I told them that we would park our vehicles a distance away from the taxi boss's house and would approach his house on foot. We would hide ourselves in the bush nearby and start to shoot at his home. He would either arm himself and fire back in self-defence or would run out of the house to where he hid the firearms to arm himself. We would scale the perimeter wall and overpower him and arrest

him, hopefully, while being armed. Not everyone agreed to my master plan, but this was not a democracy. I made the rules.

We were armed to the teeth and undertook the sixty-kilometre trip to the neighbouring policing area. We travelled in convoy in all seven of our vehicles. We drove faster than normal as most of the detectives were sceptical of this idea and nervous about the outcome. The detectives from the neighbouring area had directed us to a primary school, where we left our vehicles and undertook the two-kilometre walk in the pitch darkness of the night. Only a few scattered houses had a light on, and we had to rely on moonlight and clear skies to find our way to the taxi boss's home. The use of torches was forbidden as this would prejudice our position and reduce the element of surprise.

We eventually arrived at the home of the taxi boss and knelt in the grass for camouflage and kept dead still. We were not sure if he had any dogs and knew that the slightest noise would alert them. This was by far the biggest house in the area, possibly a three-bedroom house, which was surrounded by a two-meter-high wire fence. A single outside light shone brightly above the main door; otherwise the house was in darkness. We were confident that the taxi owner was at home, as the other detectives knew him well and had told us that he sleeps at home to protect his wife and daughter.

We took up our positions, and when my detectives were ready, I raised my R5 automatic rifle and, on automatic fire, emptied the magazine into the air. Suddenly, lights came on inside the house, and I clipped a new and full magazine into my R5 rifle. The front door was flung open, and a figure came running out of the house. I caught a glimpse of a figure running towards the shadows, towards the side of the house.

I knew this was the taxi owner, although I had never seen him before and the description of him given to me by local detectives was very vague. I was sure he was armed, so I fired again, but this time aiming at the person as he ran. I needed to shoot him before he disappeared into the shadows; otherwise, he would have an advantage over us. As I pulled the trigger, in a double tap, I heard a shout of agony, and realised from the voice that I had shot a woman.

One of the guys near me whispered loudly that I had shot the taxi driver's wife. Realising the danger I had put my detectives

in, I ordered them to withdraw back to our vehicles. We ran as fast as we could, before drawing any attention.

Little did I realise that I had fuelled tensions between rival taxi operators, and over the next few days, taxi-related violence increased in that area.

During the assassination of another taxi boss, several spent AK47 cartridges were recovered at the scene. The taxi boss had been ambushed and assassinated while travelling to town in his personal vehicle. The modus operandi between this assassination and that of Mr McKenzie had striking similarities, so I decided to have the spent cartridges from this scene compared to the spent cartridges found at the murder of James McKenzie.

Within two days, I received a phone call from the Ballistic Lab. The ballistic examiner established that these cartridges matched those found at the murder scene of Mr McKenzie and that both had been fired from the same rifle. Finally, I had a break, and I took a sigh of relief. I was finally getting somewhere in my investigation and had something positive to report back on.

This information meant that I had to investigate a taxi-related murder in conjunction with the murder of Mr McKenzie. In contrast, I would be dealing with a community that was not hostile towards the police, so I hoped information leading to the arrest of this killer would be easily obtained.

Within a day or so, we realised we were dealing with a gun for hire. I despatched my team and instructed them to find this hitman before more people lost their lives.

The following evening, my detectives and I were at "*vlakplaas*" discussing information they had gathered that day when I received a report of another farm murder. This time, it was on the "wealthy" side of the main road, which was unheard of. Those wealthy and, to some extent, liberal farmers lived in big homes and had good security. They paid their staff very well and hardly ever experienced crime.

The charge office sergeant told me that he had just received the report from a farm labourer and that the murder had happened within the last hour. He had despatched the patrol van to the farm in search of the suspects.

As my detectives and I travelled along the gravel road toward town, I thought of the time I had been stationed there,

and subsequent to my leaving, we had never experienced a farmer being killed on that side of the main road. I thought of the victim, Mr Ellis, and remembered meeting him at a monthly meeting regarding crime in the area. I thought of how liberal, prim and proper he was. He was most likely the second generation in this country, and it was evident that he was well-educated by his British parents. He treated everyone with respect and expected the same respect in return. His farm labourers were loyal, and many of them were born on the farm and had worked for him for many years.

Nothing could have prepared me for what I was about to witness. I drove my vehicle through the double-motorised gate and along a driveway that was flanked by large oak trees. When I eventually arrived at the double-story Spanish-style house, all the house lights were on, and the maid stood outside sobbing her heart out, with both her hands covering her face. She was not in a state to speak to us, so we decided to go into the house.

The house was lavishly furnished with modern lounge furniture and expensive paintings and mirrors that were elegantly displayed on the walls. A thick long haired Van Dyke carpet covered the lounge floor. I noticed bloody footprints coming down the staircase. My estimation was that they could be size ten Lucky Star *tekkie*. I proceeded to climb the staircase with my firearm drawn and stretched out in front of me.

I knew that I was about to come across a victim, but I was not sure if the perpetrators were still inside or not, and I wasn't about to take any chances. At the top of the staircase, I turned to my right and walked down a passageway until I reached the master bedroom.

At the foot of the queen-sized bed, I saw the body of Mr Ellis lying face down in a pool of blood on the luxurious carpets. The right side of his skull had been blown away by the force of a bullet fired at close range. I noticed a spent AK47 cartridge lying on the carpet about three meters from his body. His wife lay on the queen-sized bed. She was much younger than him and very well taken care of. Her long, blond curly hair was scattered on the bed around her, and she was still wearing her expensive diamond necklace with matching earrings. Her Gucci watch was on her wrist and covered in blood. She had been tied to the bed by her wrists with wire, and her Sissy boy jeans had been removed and

lay scattered on the floor. Her pretty floral blouse had been torn, exposing her elegant body and mascara was smudged on her face. Her blue, lifeless eyes stared upward, and her painful smile was frozen in time. The smell of death overpowered her expensive perfume. I was instantly nauseous at the thought of the pain she endured before succumbing to her fate at the hands of a sadistic killer.

Just when I thought it was over, one of my detectives called me to a room at the other end of the passage. I walked into the daughter's pretty room and found a lifeless and partially naked body on the floor of the *en suite* bathroom. I estimated that she was about eleven or twelve, as her naked breasts were still developing, and she had just started puberty. She also had long blond hair, and her features resembled that of her mother. She looked so innocent and had suffered the same fate as her mother. I needed air. The brutality of these murders made me furious, and I started to break out in a sweat.

I walked outside and had just lit a cigarette when I heard my detectives calling me to a downstairs bedroom. I nipped my smoke and walked back into the house. Lying next to a single bed in a typical boy's room, I saw the body of a boy lying in a pool of blood. This blond boy, possibly six or seven years old, had been struck behind the head as the gash was about fifteen centimetres long. Dry blood knotted his blond hair around the wound. I glanced briefly again at the dead boy, and my stomach turned. I needed to get outside. I needed some alone time to compose myself.

I sat on the wrought iron patio furniture outside and lit a cigarette. As I inhaled the toxic smoke slowly, I tried to come to terms with what I had just witnessed. I smoked the entire cigarette by inhaling as much smoke as I could, and within a few minutes, I realised that the cigarette had burned to the filter. I took a deep breath before rising from the chair, and I walked slowly back into the house. I decided to try and establish a motive. I doubted whether robbery could be a motive as Mrs Ellis was wearing expensive jewellery. I was reluctant to go into the master bedroom but realised that I needed to investigate the crime scene for any clues. I was relieved to see that my detectives had covered the bodies of Mr and Mrs Ellis with a sheet.

I searched the master bedroom for anything obvious that might have been stolen when one of my detectives walked in with a much more composed maid. He explained to me that she had told him that she was in the kitchen, washing the dinner dishes, when suddenly she heard a gunshot going off upstairs. She was frightened and hid herself in the pantry adjacent to the kitchen. She did not see anyone, but she heard four different voices in the lounge after the gunshots went off. She understood what they were saying as she overheard them speaking. She further explained that these males were talking about where they should meet later that night, but the one guy kept insisting that he did not know where that place was. The one who suggested where they meet explained slowly until they all agreed to the rendezvous at eleven o'clock that night. I asked her if Mr Ellis left money or firearms in the house. She told me that he didn't keep any money, but he did keep a handgun in the drawer next to his bed. I asked my detective to check the drawer, and I raced downstairs to the lounge.

In the corner stood an antique corner table with a telephone on it. I noticed a notepad next to the phone and a pen lying untidily on the table. I lifted the notepad to the light and noticed indentations on the top page. Excitedly, I ran into the boy's bedroom and searched his desk against the window. As I opened the drawers, I saw a variety of pencils. I hurriedly grabbed a pencil and ran back to the telephone table in the lounge. I moved the notepad onto the centre of the table and pushed the telephone to one side. Carefully, I etched over the top and blank page of the notepad until the entire page was etched. Vaguely, I could see writing, and what initially looked like scribbles, was, in fact, a roughly drawn map. When I tore the page from the notebook and held it to the light, the indentations became more visible, and I called out to one of my detectives to examine the piece of paper and interpret what he made of it. He held the paper to the light and examined the indentations, with squinted eyes.

Suddenly, his face lit up, and he said that this was a map to Khulu's Tavern near Ziphagamile Secondary School. He knew it well as he had served as a detective in that area. He told me that the tavern was about eighty kilometres away, on the main road leading to the coast. Remembering what the maid had told us,

these guys intended to meet at eleven o'clock that night. I realised that we did not have much time. I decided to leave a uniformed officer to safeguard the crime scene, which we would attend to later. I glanced at my watch and saw it was already five past ten.

Hurriedly, I rounded up my detectives and quickly briefed them about my discovery. Not all of them were present when I etched the notepad, as each had his own function on the crime scene. While we ran out to the vehicles, one detective shouted over his shoulder to the maid that we would be back later. Within minutes, we were on the main road, travelling at high speed towards the coast.

It was just after eleven when we arrived at the tavern. I noticed a white Audi A4 and a silver 230i BMW parked in front of the tavern. The tavern was in a rural area, and these two cars looked oddly out of place there. From where we parked our vehicles, we could hear loud music being played through distorted speakers that stood outside. Quickly but stealthily, we ran toward the tavern door. I let my detectives walk in first, as it would be very conspicuous if a white male walked into a tavern late at night. Once they had been inside for several moments, I realised their presence had not raised any alarms, so I decided to walk into the tavern, leaving one detective outside the main door.

When I walked in, I felt the mood suddenly change. Everybody stopped chatting and turned to look at me. I looked at the table in the corner and saw four males sitting together but keeping to themselves. I walked over to the table slowly, constantly surveying what was going on around me. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed one of my detectives following me.

The four guys stared at me with their drinks on the table in front of them. The closer I came to them, I noticed how much more nervous they were becoming. I realised that this situation could become volatile in an instant, so I moved my right hand to my side, ready to draw my nine-millimetre pistol if trouble broke out.

I was confident that I could defend myself in an instant as my Beretta was already cocked and on fire. I walked slowly towards the table, never taking my eyes off the four guys, when suddenly, one guy stood up and ran towards the door. My

detectives and I ran towards the table, leaving the one who ran away to be arrested by the detective outside.

As I approached the table, I drove my fist into the face of one suspect, causing him to fall off the bar stool he sat on. As he fell to the floor, I raised my pistol and pointed it at the other two suspects, who remained seated with a look of horror across their faces. Moments later, my detectives were on top of the two guys on the floor. A scuffle broke out as they tried in vain to resist, but my detectives were too well-trained and overpowered these guys with relative ease.

The other patrons were intoxicated but dared not to challenge us, so everyone was kept at bay without interference. When we escorted the three outside, I noticed that the fourth person was already in handcuffs. I knew from experience that now, while these guys were still in a state of shock, was the best time to interrogate them. My detectives searched their pants pockets and found the keys to the vehicles in two guy's pockets. We quickly and thoroughly searched the two vehicles, and in the boot of the Audi A4, we recovered an AK47 rifle with ten rounds of ammunition.

Realising that we needed time alone with these guys and that we were drawing attention, we placed them into our vehicles and left the tavern. Vast pine plantations covered the surrounding hills, and thick mist started to impair visibility. We drove along a gravel road through the plantation until we came across a loading site used by SAPPI. Piles of logs were stacked neatly at the side of a clearing, and I thought this would be an ideal place to interrogate these suspects.

The suspects were separated and individually placed in our minibus for questioning. I forced a suspect to take a seat while a detective sat behind him. We warned the suspect that he was about to die and would be buried in a shallow grave if he did not cooperate. Normally, at this point, suspects don't take us seriously.

The detective seated behind the suspect would pull a tyre tube around the suspect's face, suffocating him. Just before the point of death, the tube was removed from his face, leaving the suspect gulping and gasping for air. Very seldom was this repeated as they would confess and volunteer information.

The second suspect was more stubborn than the first, so I instructed my detective to pull the tube tightly across his face for a little longer. Sooner or later, he would crack and reveal everything. The instruction is that the suspect had to signal by stamping his feet on the floor when he wanted to talk, but this guy was stubborn. Minutes had passed without a signal from the suspect, and I realised that soon he would die from affixation; I instructed my detective to release the tube. As the tube was removed from his face, he started to gulp for air, and I heard him gag and gasp for air in a panic, and I realised that he had swallowed his tongue and was suffocating.

Quickly, I leaned over to the ignition and removed the keys. One detective grabbed the keys from me. He forced the suspect's mouth open. By now, the suspect was losing consciousness, and his eyes were falling backwards in his skull.

The detective forced the ignition keys down the suspect's throat. Eventually, he managed to wedge the tongue out of his throat, and the suspect started to breathe. Visibly shaken and close to death, he decided to tell us what we wanted to know.

We then placed the driver of the Audi A4 in the minibus. I was most interested in what he had to say as we found the AK47 in the boot of his car. He was in total denial, stating that he had borrowed the car from a friend and wasn't aware that there was a rifle in the boot. My detective pulled the tube, but he remained defiant. I was tired after a long day in the sun, and my frustration grew more intense. I suspected him of also being the person responsible for Mr McKenzie's murder, the leader of this gang and possibly the mastermind behind the spate of murders. After about thirty minutes, the suspect remained mum, and my frustrations were at boiling point.

I was prepared to kill this suspect and dispose of his body. In a final attempt to get this suspect to confess, I decided to sit on his lap and push his body hard against the backrest of the seat, crushing his rib cage, while my detective continued to pull the tube tightly around his face. Suddenly, his body jolted, and he straightened his legs as if in a fit. With his right foot, he forced my left ankle under the front passenger seat, and I heard the tendons tear and snap.

The pain was excruciating, which pissed me off even more. There was no time to get to a doctor. I was on the verge of solving

these murders, and I just had to endure the pain. We placed the suspect back into another vehicle, and my detectives and I regrouped to discuss all the information.

All the suspects agreed that the last suspect was the gun for hire. They had also told us that they were approached by him to assist in an armed robbery, for which he would pay them ten thousand rand each. All they knew was that they would rob a very rich farmer. He needed their help as the farmer lived with his wife and two children and had good security on the farm. At no point did he mention that they would kill the entire family. The plan they had agreed on, was that they were to keep the farmer and his family in one room while he went through their possessions to rob them of their valuables and firearms.

When they entered the house, they were surprised to see how young the children were, as they were under the impression that the children were grown up, which was why he needed their assistance. The hitman told them that his uncle works on the farm and that he had arranged for the uncle to leave a latch on a lounge window unlocked. The uncle had told him that the window would be closed but not locked, and that they could gain access through that window.

They further described how they hid themselves in the garden in front of the window and watched the family having dinner through the lounge window. After dinner, the children went to their bedrooms to do their homework, and the farmer and his wife went upstairs to their bedroom. They waited for the maid to clear the table and move the dishes to the kitchen. They felt for the unlocked window until they it near the front entrance facing the entrance to the farm. The window was quietly opened, and they climbed through the window and gained access to the house.

The hitman and the one who swallowed his tongue walked up the stairs to the master bedroom. On entering the master bedroom, they found the farmer sitting on the bed while his wife was preparing to bathe. The hitman was armed with an AK47 rifle, and he stormed into the bedroom, pointing the rifle at the farmer. He shouted at the farmer, who was startled by their presence.

The gunman demanded money, still pointing the rifle at the farmer. The wife shrieked in fear, which alarmed her

daughter, but by that time, one of the guys had overpowered her in the bathroom, where she, too, was preparing to bathe. The fourth suspect accosted the boy downstairs as he tried to flee from his bedroom. We also learned that the deceased had told the gunman that he didn't keep money at his home, and a scuffle broke out before the hitman shot him once in the head. The terrified wife tried to escape to protect her children but was apprehended at the bedroom door. This guy couldn't resist the sight of her luscious body, so he dragged her by the hair and pulled her towards the bed where he raped her. Not wanting her to be able to identify him, he forcefully grabbed her long, slender neck with both hands and held tight until her wriggling stopped and her body became limp. He released his grip when he realised he had strangled her to death. The nakedness of the daughter's young body was her demise, as she too was raped and killed in the bathroom where they had found her. Not wanting the son to be a witness to this attack, it was decided to kill him in his bedroom.

Picturing these events and trying to make sense of it all nauseated me and made me want to puke, and my ankle hurt like hell. I decided that they had all been given a chance to come clean, and the hitman had been the most stubborn. We needed to spend more time with him to get to the bottom of it all. We escorted the suspects to the nearest police station, where they were detained as suspects. The hitman still had a lot of explaining to do. Before taking the suspect to "*Vlakplaas*," I stopped at the local garage and bought painkillers, as my ankle was swollen to twice its normal size.

We continued to question the gunman at *"Vlakplaas*" about the murder of James McKenzie. At first, he denied any knowledge of the murder but realised our relentless interrogation would not end until we knew everything about this murder. Eventually, he acknowledged that he owned the AK47 rifle. That was at least a step in the right direction. My detectives had told him that we were going to kill him if he didn't cooperate fully and that we would dispose of his body in the sea, where he would never be found, but still, he refused to answer any questions. It was late, and my detectives grew impatient, and he now had to choose between life and death. I was in no condition to walk, so I let my detectives deal with this suspect.

They grabbed him by the arm and took him to the back of the farmhouse. Again, he was asked to choose between cooperating and death, and again, he was reluctant to say anything. My detectives uncuffed him and handed him a spade. They told him to start digging his grave. Realising this was not going to end well, he started sweating profusely. Eventually, he broke down and told us of his involvement in the family murder. As part of their reward for partaking in the murder and robbery, he gave the deceased's firearm to his brother, who was one of the other suspects.

When asked about the murder of Mr McKenzie, he told us that the local chief, Chief Dlamini, had sent word out for a hitman. Word got to him about the assignment, so he made arrangements to meet with Chief Dlamini at the royal kraal in this same area. Chief Dlamini had told him that they, as a community, had done everything possible to get Mr McKenzie off his farm. He said that his people have lived in these hills for generations, and they didn't want any white farmers on their land. They wanted their land back, even if it meant killing all the farmers and their families.

Once McKenzie abandoned his farm, others would follow, and if they didn't, he would ensure that their wives were raped and killed. They had to do whatever they could to reclaim the land of their ancestors. The chief explained that the old man was stubborn and refused to go, so he, in his capacity as tribal chief, decided that he had to use extreme measures to force him off the farm, and that would be at the cost of his son's life.

The chief offered him one thousand rand to kill the son, and they agreed that payment would only be made once the assignment had been completed. The chief explained where the farm was and told him that he would send a young boy to accompany him and point out a single-lane gravel road, which the son used daily to tend to the vegetables he was growing.

For several days, the hitman hid himself in the thick bush adjacent to the road and watched. He familiarised himself with the son's daily routine and planned the assassination. On this fateful day, the hitman armed himself with his AK47 rifle and took up his position in the bush. As James McKenzie did on every day after working the field, he drove his Land Rover up the gravel road just before sunset. The hitman waited for the ideal moment,

then fired his rifle on automatic fire, emptying the entire magazine of twenty rounds of ammunition at James McKenzie. The vehicle was riddled with bullets, and he watched as the vehicle veered off the road and collided with the embankment. The hitman stood up from where he hid and ran down to the gravel road. He then ran to the vehicle and looked inside just to ensure that James McKenzie was dead. It only took a glance at his lifeless body, slumped over the steering wheel, for him to confirm his suspicions. He fled the scene to a neighbouring farm and hid himself until daybreak.

I became so angry when I thought of how cheap life was and that a hit could be put on a person's life for a reward of only one thousand rand. I instructed my detectives to place him back into the vehicle. They looked at me bewilderedly but complied with my instruction. We drove to a deserted hut about two kilometres from the McKenzie's farm. We parked our vehicles, and I removed the AK47 rifle from behind my seat. I used the rifle as a walking stick, and we walked to the abandoned hut on the slopes of a hill. I uncuffed the suspect and ordered him to start digging. My detectives handed him a spade, and he looked at me confused but obliged.

As he started digging, I raised my nine-millimetre pistol and fired three shots into his abdomen. My gunfire echoed between the hills, and a dog started to bark far in the distance. A look of shock and horror came across his face as he fell to the ground, gasping for breath. Blood ran from the corner of his mouth. I heard him gargle in his blood. I stood over the hitman; his eyes stared blankly up at me until he took his final breath. I threw the AK47 next to his lifeless body and contacted the duty officer.

Later that morning, I arrived at Mr McKenzie's farm and was met by Mrs McKenzie, who was cutting vegetables from her vegetable patch on the side of the house. She stopped what she was doing and walked to where I had parked.

She greeted me with a smile and said, "How is your investigation progressing, detective? I'm sure the locals around here must be giving you a hard time." I smiled and didn't answer.

She realised I wanted to talk to her husband, so she led me inside the house, where we found Mr McKenzie reading a newspaper in the lounge. He removed his glasses as he looked at

me and placed his folded newspaper on the coffee table. He greeted me and instantly realised that I had come with information that might interest him. He led me to the dining room and pulled out a chair. When his wife brought a tray with coffee, milk and sugar, he told her that we needed to be alone.

On our way to the dining room, he looked down and realised I was limping. He inquisitively asked why I was limping, but I lied, saying that I twisted my ankle when getting out of my vehicle. I told him that it was probably only a sprain and that I would see a doctor later that day. He sat forward, waiting in anticipation of my telling him the reason for my visit.

I stared into his blue eyes and eventually broke the silence by saying; "It's over. I killed him." I leaned forward and studied his expression, surprised that he was not overjoyed by the news. His eyes filled with tears as he was overcome by grief. "Another person died because of my reluctance to hand my farm to those who probably own it anyway," he said, still looking down at the floor.

I left his farm with mixed emotions. On the one hand, I had done my job and solved the murder. On the other hand, I felt guilty for killing the hitman. Mr McKenzie's reaction had taken me by surprise. I thought he would be overjoyed that justice was done to avenge his son's death, but this was not the case, and I could not undo what I had already done. With a heavy heart, I went to see a local doctor about my ankle. He examined the X-rays and told me that I had a fractured ankle and that I would need to wear a plaster cast for six weeks. I smiled as I walked out of the surgery, knowing that I would be cutting the cast off in a few days. There was still too much I had to do, and a cast was not going to hamper my movements.

I heard years later that a book called "The Midlands" (Jonny Steinberg, 2002) was written about the death of James McKenzie and the investigation of his murder. This killing was deemed the first "land-related" murder in Natal. I managed to find the book and was infuriated that the facts had been distorted, although the death of the hitman was a little sceptical, which I appreciated. It had been written from the view of the black inhabitants who claim they had lived in these hills for generations and their land was "stolen" from them by Cecil John

Rhodes, who had planted cotton on their land, and the time had come for them to reclaim their land. They were entitled to this land, and the fact that the white farmers had legitimately bought their farm was not relevant.

Over a period of about three weeks, five dead young black females were discovered in different areas on a sugarcane farm. There were several similarities between these murders. All the women were aged between twenty and thirty. These women worked on the farm and stayed in a compound for women on the farm. The most striking similarity was that they were all raped and strangled to death with their underwear. It was clear that we were dealing with a serial killer.

Some victims were married to other farm workers, whilst others were not, but all were similar in build. Due to the different states of decomposition, I concluded that these women had been killed over the last month and had been killed where they worked as cane cutters. All the victims had been covered in cut sugarcane in an attempt to conceal their bodies. I examined the underwear more closely and discovered that the same knot had been used to tie the underwear around their mouths, which ultimately resulted in the cause of death being asphyxiation. Either panties or bras were used, but the knot remained the same, making the signature unique. I had a basic knowledge of knot tying from my time in the naval cadets. I knew this was a unique knot I had never seen before.

The killer had access to the farm and could move around freely without detection or raising suspicion. He knew the routine and where the ladies had been deployed to cut cane on this five-hundred-and-fifty-hectare farm. He worked with his hands and was physically strong enough to overpower his victims. I estimated that the perpetrator was between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age.

My detectives and I knew we had to first focus on the male farm workers and establish whether anyone fitted the profile. The farm manager was reluctant to allow us to interview all 75 male employees, as this would negatively affect production.

The manager asked his secretary to draw all personnel files on male employees aged between twenty-five and thirty-five years. She returned to the manager's office about thirty minutes

later with a stack of files. She neatly placed the stack of files on the manager's desk and left his office, closing the door behind her. We established that only thirty-nine males between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five years were employed on the farm.

This came as a huge relief to the manager as he realised that his entire male workforce would not be disrupted. I asked if I could examine these employment records at my office, and promised to return them at a later stage, and the manager agreed to my request. I returned to my office, leaving my detectives to conduct their own enquiries.

In the comfort of my office, I studied the personnel files. Firstly, I looked at the different job descriptions. Seven males were employed as drivers, three of whom were tractor drivers. The others drove machinery to load cane, while some drove trucks and bakkies around the farm. Only the tractor drivers bailed and cut the cane before loading it on a trailer behind a tractor. All cut and bailed cane would then be taken to a central point where a TLB would be used to load the cane on a truck destined for the refinery. I realised that I needed to have a closer look at the tractor drivers, who had the freedom to travel anywhere on the farm to cut and collect cane.

My detectives later reported that there were no witnesses to these murders. Women who were employed to cut cane were scattered throughout the farm, often working alone or in small groups. Each woman had a target for the day and would remain where the foreman had placed them for the entire day until a tractor and trailer arrived at six o'clock that evening to take them back to their compound. Most would only see their friends and co-workers after work at the compound. The women had very little, if any, contact with other women during working hours. I told my detectives to bring the tractor drivers in for interrogation, as I had a gut feeling that one of them was our man.

We left two drivers in an unoccupied office and questioned one driver at my office. This driver told us he had been employed on the farm for ten years. He was twenty-eight years old, and his wife was also employed on the farm. They had two small children who also stayed on the farm. He confirmed that he was a tractor driver and declared no knowledge of the murders. He knew the victims as some worked with his wife and were friends. He said

that since the victims were discovered, the women were too afraid to work alone, and the foreman agreed that they could work in small groups. I realised that this humble and cooperative rural young man was not involved and knew nothing about the murders.

I excused him, and as he stood up, he bowed respectfully and placed his worn cap on his head before leaving my office. I requested my detectives to bring the next tractor driver into my office. This man, aged twenty-five, had only been employed on the farm for the past two years. He was married, but his wife remained with their four daughters at their homestead in the Eastern Cape. He stayed in a room for single male employees. He would only go home when the year's production closes between Christmas and New Year.

While we interviewed this young man, I watched his body language. He sat on the edge of the chair at my desk and kept moving his legs as if he was nervous or frustrated by this interview. As the interview progressed, and the questions became more intense, he started to fidget with his hands, often holding his hands together to prevent him from fidgeting. I questioned him about his job profile, and he confirmed he was a tractor driver. I told him that the bailing would then also form part of his job description, to which he agreed. He admitted to knowing the victims as he collected cut sugar cane from them but denied any knowledge of the murders. During the interview, his frustration increased and became more noticeable. I remained seated behind my desk, carefully listening to his answers and searching for any clues. I had a length of pink lint, which I fiddled with as he spoke. I noticed that he kept glancing at my hands as he spoke or listened to the questions. My detectives questioned him, and I noticed that he was becoming fixated on what I was doing with the lint. I decided to knot the lint with the same knot used by the killer, but I couldn't get it right, so I untied the lint and tried again. Again, I noticed this guy looking at what I was doing, and soon it became a stare. I kept trying to imitate the knot. As I tied the lint, I noticed his frustration building. I kept getting it wrong and realised that I was tormenting this guy with my inability to tie the lint. I deliberately started to get it wrong as it riled this guy, and I knew then that it was just a matter of time before he cracked. I placed the one end, over the other end and

made a knot, but I could not perfect the knot, so I tried again by creating a loop and pulling the one side through the loop, but this also did not nearly resemble the unique knot used by the killer. He kept looking at my hands, and I knew I was tormenting him. Signs of frustration were written across his face, and he started to bite his teeth so hard that his jaw muscles started to bulge. I noticed sweat form on his brow, as I continued to get it wrong. I decided not to interrupt his frustrations, so I kept fiddling with the lint. I knew that, eventually, he wouldn't be able to take the physiological torture any longer and that he would snap. Suddenly, he leaped from his chair and leaned across the desk to grab the lint out of my hands. I voluntarily handed the lint to him, and within seconds, he tied the knot.

We decided to conduct a search of his room. We found a number of souvenirs, such as beaded necklaces, copper bracelets and women's underwear, all of which were identified by the victims' family and friends. DNA testing proved to match the vaginal swabs taken from the victims. I returned the personnel files and told the manager of our findings and arrest. He was shocked to hear who had killed the woman and told me that he was such a hard-working young chap who kept to himself and never gave him any trouble.

I continued to investigate cases of murder, but only murders of people with status, in other words, where the victims were white. I had an average of about eighty such cases on hand each month, and I lived for my job. I loved the excitement, the adrenaline rush, when arresting the perpetrators, and all the alcohol consumption that went with doing a job like this. In fact, I was married to my job and spent more time working than I did with my family. I had witnessed at least four gruesome murder or rape scenes a week, and the effects of dealing with violent crime were taking its toll. I was promoted to captain, not because of my behaviour, but because of my exceptionally high success rate and diligence. I had also adopted an unorthodox manner of investigation, which my commanders identified, and chose to ignore. It only mattered that perpetrators were brought to book. The higher my success rate, the better the statistics were, and the better my branch commander, regional commander, and provincial commander looked. I was promoted to leader of a task team comprising

twenty-five top detectives throughout the region. We took no shit, did as we pleased, drank a lot, went wherever we wanted to go, and nobody asked any questions, and we only answered to our Branch commander. We got results, that's all that mattered, and that's the way I liked it.

Unfortunately, by that time, I was in a downward spiral and didn't realise it. The more we witnessed senseless murders and rapes of the old and defenceless, the more we drank to cope with the effects. The more we drank, the harder we worked, the more violent and unforgiving we became. When drunk, we had courage and were fearless. We would go into any township or hostel and arrest any violent gang member or wanted criminal. The adrenaline rush also contributed to our success, and I thrived on it.

My marriage suffered. I would come home drunk after attending to a gruesome murder scene or a celebration after arresting a wanted criminal. I was irritable, short-tempered and moody. I was arrogant and enjoyed starting an argument with the biggest guy in a pub, often resulting in us coming to blows. I proudly wore the scars on my face and earned a reputation as a troublemaker. As my reputation spread, guys in pubs became reluctant to fight me. My wife realised that not only was I bad-tempered, but I was also experiencing severe night sweats and restlessness. In an attempt to save our marriage, she contacted our General Practitioner, who suggested to her that I might be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. I refused to acknowledge my condition or to get help. I was tough and enjoyed being the person I had become. I commanded respect wherever I went, and I was intimidating with my one hundred and sixteen-kilogram frame and bad attitude. My wife and son would bear the brunt of my volatile moods and quick temper. She often told me to see someone for professional help or go for counselling, but I laughed at her advice and told her to stop nagging as it irritated me. My reply was always the same. Doctors only know textbook stuff, and none of them have experienced what I have, so how can they help me? They only know how to sugar-coat shit and speak a lot of bullshit anyway. I didn't have time to tell them my life story and listen to their crap, and I certainly didn't want their sympathy.

Johan, my colleague and friend, was handed an investigation of the murder of a prominent businessman in a small, predominantly Indian town. After the initial crime scene investigation and interviewing relatives and employees, we realised that this was an "inside job" and that the housemaid knew more than what she was letting on. She became a person of interest. The victim had returned home after attending mosque and walked in on an intruder in his house. In a panic, the intruder shot the victim once in the chest and fled the scene with only a few valuables. We established that the intruder was surprised by the victim's sudden appearance at home and shot him once in an attempt to flee the scene. The housemaid was in the house at the time. There was no sign of forced entry, and she was also unharmed at the time of the house robbery. We became very suspicious about her possible involvement. I instructed our field members to remove her from the scene and question her thoroughly.

Later, the field members returned to our offices with the maid, who was still in a state of shock. They told Johan that the maid was from Port St. Johns and that her son, Pedzi, was the perpetrator. The maid explained that she and her son had planned the murder (intended as just a robbery) and that he had fled back to Port St Johns. We obtained all the necessary information pertaining to this suspect and headed for Port St. Johns. Johan and I were excited about the trip as we had never been to Port St. Johns before. Before leaving, we bought the usual case of beer for courage. Our stress levels were high due to the number of cases we had to investigate and all the violent scenes we attended, so we thought that this would also be a good opportunity for us to get away for a few days.

We drove through the small town of Lusikisiki and stopped to buy another case of beer. The road from Lusikisiki to Port St. Johns was a gravel road that wound down a mountain pass towards the sea for about fifty kilometres. We drove carefully along the gravel road, stopping frequently to admire the natural beauty and primitive wilderness of the area. As we navigated our vehicle down the winding gravel road, young black boys with dried snot on their upper lips would run alongside our vehicle, waving at us, hoping for a few loose coins. Their torn clothes and appearance resembled the huts on the hills and along the road.

Extreme poverty was striking, and I wondered how people could survive under such conditions.

After about an hour's drive, we arrived at Port St. Johns. The dilapidated and unmaintained colonial-style buildings indicated that this must have been a flourishing white-owned town before the ANC came into power. The Victorian buildings made me think of the early English settlers and how remote and beautiful this area must have been when they decided to establish a town.

While driving along a gravel road towards the beach, we passed the Royal Hotel, and again, I was struck by the colonial architecture. Sadly, now most of the town was dilapidated, unmaintained and run down. Litter scattered the sidewalks, and municipal bins were overflowing with rubbish. We drove slowly through the town, in awe of the natural beauty and wilderness surrounding this town. As we continued towards the beach, we did not see a single white person. We continued driving until we reached an area called Second Beach, and I wondered where the First Beach was, only to find out later that there was no First Beach. Second Beach was the most beautiful, untamed beach I had ever seen. The sand was white and soft. Crystal blue waves crashed on the beach. Johan and I remained in our vehicle for some time in total awe of this magnificent view. We were slightly intoxicated by that time, and it felt as though we were on holiday. This was the break we needed and deserved. We needed to just get away from it all for a while, away from our nagging wives, deadlines, crime scenes and traumatised family members. We decided to spend a few days there to relax and unwind. We were so fortunate that there was no cell phone reception, no communication with the outside world, and no way of contact with our commander or our wives. We were at total peace and would drink and braai as much as we pleased without consequences.

During our second day, we were approached by a group of young black teenagers who had caught crayfish and offered them to us for ten rand each. It felt like we were in paradise. We swam, drank lots of beer and braaied. This was the life. That afternoon, we noticed a middle-aged white male come walking towards us. His well-tanned body with grey chest hairs was exposed as his shirt was open, and he wore no shoes. He greeted us, and we

offered him a beer, which he gladly accepted. We sat on a grass embankment overlooking the beach and horizon in the distance. After gulping his beer, we offered him another, which he accepted with gratitude. He told us that he was a general practitioner and lived in Joburg. He brought his wife and two daughters on holiday here one year, and he fell in love with the place. A few years later, he found out his wife was having an affair, and they decided to get divorced. After a messy divorce, he sold his practice and moved to Port St. Johns, where he had lived ever since. He explained that he was tired of the rat race in Joburg and just needed to get away. He vowed never to return to city life and was adamant that he would probably live longer here in Port St. Johns.

On our fifth day of heavy drinking, braaing and having a good time, Johan and I lay naked on our backs on the beach, savouring every moment of this newly found freedom, when suddenly we saw a military helicopter fly over us. The helicopter flew low enough for me to see three occupants in the helicopter, the pilot, the co-pilot and a third person in the back. After a few minutes, the helicopter flew over the ocean and turned around. The helicopter flew over us again. I shielded my eyes from the sun and looked up and noticed the helicopter was hovering above us. The helicopter landed on the beach near us, and we noticed an armed man running towards us in a swarm of beach sand created by the helicopter. It was only when he was close to us that we recognised the uniform as being that of the task force. Johan and I scrambled to our feet and ran for our clothes, but before we reached the embankment, this member grabbed us by the arm. The sergeant told us that they were based at the task force in Durban and that they were commissioned to find us. Our commander was worried that something had happened to us as there had been no contact with us for five days. We apologised for the inconvenience, but our bloodshot eyes and beer breath were a giveaway, and the sergeant was visibly not impressed that we had wasted their time and resources. We promised to head back later that day. We expected a tongue-lashing, to say the least, but what's new?

The following day, at our office, my commander handed me a notice of disciplinary action. The charge was "Acting in a manner that is unbecoming of a police officer." What a joke! I

thought. There was so much we were permitted to do in the name of crime investigation that was blatantly wrong or illegal, and now they want to discipline us for being missing and drunk for five days. Bloody double standards, I thought. They would turn a blind eye when it suited them, but now, just a little mischief, and they wanted to charge us. What a load of bull shit. Anyway, during the hearing, I pleaded guilty, and my promotion was withheld again for another year. My promotion was withheld so many times that I would be extremely lucky to get a promotion in the next twenty years.

There were five Murder and Robbery units in Kwa-Zulu Natal. We often had dealings with each other as criminals aren't limited to boundaries and would often commit a crime in one police district, then flee to another. Our interaction with other units was limited to work-related issues only, so our provincial commander suggested that once a year, all units should get together over a weekend. This social event was deemed to be an official shooting practice. He ordered that every year, one of the five units would host the event, and the following year, another unit. This event would be rotated on a yearly basis.

Members of Murder and Robbery units drove regulation vehicles. These vehicles were previously privately owned but were stolen and recovered. Insurance companies settled the claims, and the police then purchased these vehicles at a reduced cost. These vehicles did not resemble police vehicles in any way. The fastest cars were issued to more senior members who often had their vehicles overhauled to make them faster.

The first "shooting exercise" was held in Newcastle. No costs were spared, and the unit used their "secret fund" to fund this exercise, which, I'm sure you've gathered, was just a glorified piss-up.

That Friday, members from all over the province arrived in their loud and fast cars. We gathered at the railway offices, where a room had been converted into a bar, and other rooms were equipped to accommodate white members. At the end of the parking lot, a four-meter by four-meter Army tent had been erected for black accommodation. In this tent was a cooler box with ice and beers, while the white members enjoyed the comfort of a bar. Outside a black constable was attending to two spit braais. The fat of the pig dripped on the coals as the carcass

rotated slowly. The smell of smoke and crackling filled the air, but we were thirsty and our immediate priority was to drink as much as we could. On the other spit was a sheep, also being attended to by the constable, who was ordered to oversee the spits.

Around midnight the guys started to compare their cars. There was a variety of fast cars, including Opel Boss 2l, Opel Kadette 2l, Mazda 626 3l, Toyota Camry 3l, and so on. I drove an Opel 2l IS. In a drunken slur, one member suggested we race to determine who had the fastest car, but another member suggested we challenge each other to determine who was the best driver. He suggested that all the black members should stand to attention in front of their tent and we should race down the one-kilometre road towards the tent, and whoever performed a hand break stop closest to the tent would win the contest. Fortunately, only the member who suggested this challenge did it. He drove his BMW 3 series at high speed along this one-kilometre road and on to the parking lot. He pushed the car to its limits and headed for the army tent on the far side of the parking lot. Twelve black members, some being my senior, stood in front of the tent and watched in horror as this BMW headed at full speed towards them. When the driver was only about twenty meters from the tent, he applied brakes and pulled the hand brake. This caused the car to slide sideways towards the tent. But the black members stood. Most of them, with their eyes shut, anticipating the collision. They knew that if they disobeyed an order, they would possibly get a flat hand to the head by one of the more senior, drunk officers. Miraculously, the vehicle came to a standstill only three meters from the tent. All who had gathered to witness this spectacle applauded the driver as he stumbled out of his car. In response, he raised his arms to acknowledge the applause.

I needed a weekend away, and my favourite destination was Cape Town. With a wad of cash from the “secret fund” and a cooler box full of beer, I headed for Cape Town for a long weekend. For the average person, it would take about sixteen hours to get to Cape Town, but I wasn’t paying for fuel, and my Opel IS could easily reach speeds of 180km/h, so I managed the trip in about twelve hours. I slept in the car, or if I had met a sympathetic patron, I would crash on their couch. If I got lucky, I would spend the night with a lonesome lady. I spent Saturday

night at Cantina Tequila in Bloubergstrand. I loved this upmarket area and often dreamed of retiring there. Girls were plentiful, which is usually the case if one has a wallet full of cash. I bought a dozen `fish bowls' that night and got too hammered to get laid. I didn't care much about that, I thought as I stumbled towards my car. A `fish bowl' consists of curacao liquor, vodka, coconut rum, sweet and sour mix, soda and pineapple juice, mixed in a fish bowl. This blue concoction is consumed through a straw. I slept in the car for an hour and decided to head back home at about four in the morning. My car had travelled this road many times before, so it knew the way home. At about six that morning, I didn't realise I was driving through a town and that the speed limit was reduced to 60km/h. I was travelling between 140 and 180km/h at the time. Suddenly, to my left, I noticed a Nissan Skyline pull a caravan across the road. The elderly driver and his wife intended to travel in the opposite direction towards Cape Town and didn't see me coming until it was too late. Across the road in front of me was a car and caravan. The driver's jaw dropped as he noticed me approaching at high speed. A collision was inevitable, so I swerved my car and collided with the caravan and not with the car. I hit the caravan on its axle. With a loud bang, the caravan broke into pieces. Pots and pans were scattered on the road, and the caravan chassis lay on its side, pulling the car's rear in the air. A terrified couple remained in their car and looked at me as I walked towards them. I started to shout at the old man, telling him that he should drive with his eyes open. I told him that my vehicle was a police vehicle and that I was going to arrest him for reckless and/or negligent driving. The couple, who were still in shock, burst into tears and apologised profusely. They begged me not to arrest them, but by that time, the local police van was on site, and the uniformed constable calmed me down.

My commander decided that I should be downgraded to a slower vehicle, so I was given a 2.4l Nissan One toner. This vehicle also did not resemble a police vehicle and had cool surfing stickers stuck to its tailgate. Its top speed was 140km/h downhill, and that irritated me.

Every murder and Robbery cop has a "spook". A spook is an unlicensed, untraceable firearm, usually a handgun. A "spook"

has saved many cops who found themselves on the wrong side of the law after a shooting incident.

It was mid-winter, and I heard that it was snowing on the Berg, so I undertook the two-and-a-half-hour drive just to taste snow in my brandy and coke. I had consumed brandy with dam water, with seawater, even with beer, but never before had I tried snow in my brandy. After the second bottle of brandy, I came up with a brilliant idea. I was in a remote area next to a peaceful dam, and there wasn't another person in sight. The only sound was the sound of happy birds in the trees surrounding the dam. Under the seat, I pulled out my spook and walked to the back of my van. I took aim and fired fifteen rounds of 9mm into the back of the van, damaging the back window and dashboard, rendering the gauges useless, and shattering the windscreen.

The following day, I reported that I was ambushed in a township, and I recommended the vehicle get scrapped as the cost of repair would exceed the cost of the vehicle.

Needless to say, the replacement vehicle was a Toyota Venture bus. To my disappointment, this donkey could only reach a top speed of 120 km/h, and that's down a mineshaft.

My father was living with us at the time. My mother divorced him, and he just couldn't cope on his own. As the years went by, he became frail and needed constant medical supervision. He was admitted to the local government hospital for treatment. I visited him during visiting hours and was horrified to see that he was in a general ward with at least thirty-eight other patients, and he was the only white male.

I immediately felt my blood boil when I realised the conditions they were keeping him under. It was when I saw he was naked and tied to a steel bedframe with bandages around his wrists that all hell broke loose. The terrified nurses called security to remove me, but when the two skinny-ass security guards saw me, they realised it would be better to negotiate with me rather than use force to remove me from the ward. I was spitting mad, and they realised they would need more than two to remove me.

My dad was immediately transferred to the main hospital, where I visited him the following evening, and he was quite cheerful and content. I missed not visiting him on his third day as

I was convinced that he would soon be discharged. He died that evening. The worst thing about losing someone is you don't have time to say sorry!

My commander told me they would be having a braai and raising some money to help with the funeral costs. I could not attend as I had to arrange the cremation, notify his pension fund, and so on. I met my partner and best friend at a supermarket the following morning. Johan and I had been the best of friends long before we joined the Murder and Robbery Unit. We were stationed in neighbouring small towns, and we visited each other often. We lived a block away from each other, and our wives were friends. Johan's son was a year younger than mine, and they often played together; we spent days and nights working together and would then spend weekends braaiing together. He was such a great guy, partner and friend.

Johan told me that he was buying his wife flowers because he arrived home very late after attending the braai at the unit, and he needed a peace offering. He told me that she was at a gala, as she was a school teacher, and that he was rushing home to put the flowers in a vase as a surprise for her when she arrived home. We chatted for a while, and I wished him luck and reminded him that make-up sex was always good. We laughed together as we walked together towards the parking lot. I told him that I was also heading home and would see him on Monday.

Johan drove about four cars ahead of me, with his son in the passenger seat. The road, although being a main road, was a single-lane road heading north, while the lane heading south was a double lane that became a single lane at intervals. As Johan reached the road where the opposite lane narrowed from a double lane to a single lane, I noticed a taxi accelerating in an attempt to pass another vehicle before he reached the end of the double lane. Unfortunately, the taxi ran out of road, and swerved onto the opposite lane, colliding head-on with Johan.

The car between Johan and I slammed on breaks to avoid another collision. I immediately stopped my car and ran to the accident site. Johan died on impact, and Luke was badly injured but was still alive. The ambulance rushed Luke to hospital, and I went to the school where Johan's wife was attending a school swimming gala. I walked quickly towards her at the edge of the pool. She caught a glimpse of me walking towards her and

immediately realised something was wrong. Luke died in the hospital before his mother could say goodbye.

My commander called me into his office about a week after Johan's death and told me that I was highly trained and experienced and that I needed to pass my expertise on to a younger member of the unit. I refused point blank to take on another partner as the hurt of losing Johan was still too real, and I preferred to work on my own with my team of detectives. He told me that it was not negotiable and that I had to take another partner. He had already selected Paul to be my new partner. Paul was a young and ambitious detective who had much potential.

I was investigating a murder south of Durban involving a shop owner who was fatally shot during an armed robbery. My team of detectives were deployed to a nearby township to obtain any possible information regarding the identity and whereabouts of the perpetrators. About two days later, they reported to me that they had identified five possible suspects and the house where they were hiding out. Late that night, we prepared ourselves to go into the township. We were heavily armed as we knew these suspects were armed and dangerous. We parked our vehicles a distance away from the house and walked slowly towards the house, with our firearms ready for any eventuality. With the smell of raw sewage lingering in my nose and a fresh breeze against my cheeks, we walked toward the house. I heard a dog bark.

Suddenly, the occupant of the house, who was only about fifty meters away, opened the windows and started shooting at us. There was rapid automatic gunfire coming from different directions as the suspect fired at us through different windows. We fell to the ground in order to take cover, and as I looked to my left, about a meter away from me, I saw Paul lying dead on his back. He sustained a single bullet wound to his head, just above his left eye.

Everyone fired at the house. The hail of bullets smashed the windows as the gunpowder smoke filled the air.

I managed to call for backup, and within about fifteen minutes, at least three armed vehicles and about fifteen uniformed policemen arrived on the scene, but it was too late;

Paul was dead. These uniformed officers stormed the bullet-riddled house only to find that the occupants had already fled.

The uniformed officers tried in vain to pursue them as they scurried into a thick bush behind the house. I covered Paul's face with my jacket and notified the duty officer of his death. Within half an hour, the duty officer arrived, completed the necessary reports, and made arrangements for Paul's body to be taken to the mortuary after the crime scene officer had taken photographs and possession of the spent cartridges found inside the house.

My team and I walked morbidly to our vehicles. We didn't say a word, unlike an hour before when we were excited and filled with adrenalin. I called the guys together and briefed them. I told them that what had happened to Paul was very unfortunate, but I was pleased that not more of us had lost our lives. The team decided to raid a local shebeen in search of free alcohol, and I agreed. I decided not to partake and told them that we would regroup at the office in the morning.

The following morning, my commander called me into his office. As I walked in, he said, "Take a seat." I sat on a lounge suite that was against the wall. "What happened to Paul was tragic, but it could have been a lot worse. I was contacted this morning by the provincial commissioner, who wanted to know why you had not utilised the task unit, which specialises in house penetration. I reassured him that you and your team were more than capable of penetrating the house and arresting the suspects, and that this incident was totally unavoidable. I also assured him that you had successfully completed a SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) course, and that you were fully equipped to undertake the arrest. He was then satisfied with my explanation. Secondly, and more pressing; he wants you and your team to investigate the death of Paul, and affect the necessary arrests," he explained.

I looked him in the eyes for a moment, waiting to see what his next reaction would be. This was far too serious to be a joke. I hesitated before answering him, without wanting to offend him.

"Sir, with all due respect, there is no way I can investigate this incident. Firstly, I'm a witness, and secondly, how can I be expected to be impartial?"

"That's exactly what I told him, but he was adamant that you must take the case," he said in a sympathetic voice.

It crossed my mind that an unwritten law existed. Any person who kills a policeman must never see the inside of a courtroom. That's the law! And that's why he wanted me to investigate this case. I understood the underlying message and told my commander that I would get my team together and get on with it right away.

The suspects had split up and had moved to other areas in the township. We received information that one suspect lived in a one-bedroom house in D Section with his girlfriend. My team identified the house, and we planned to go there that evening. I met my team on the beach earlier that evening. There was no real planning or strategising, as everyone knew what to do. We drank a few beers and proceeded in convoy to the house. We parked our vehicles a distance away and went to the house on foot. There was a single outside light situated above the front door. Only one light was on in the house. There was a faint drizzle outside, and the smell of damp earth filled the air. We knew this suspect was armed and dangerous, but we were prepared. Each of us was armed with an R5 semi-automatic rifle and our service pistols. We weren't taking any chances.

As we approached the front door, we got into position, and I kicked the door open. As it flung open, three of my guys and I entered the house. Two ran for the bedroom while another and I remained in the lounge open-plan kitchen area. The suspect was lying on the sofa watching television. The sound of the door being kicked open startled him. He immediately sat upright without saying a word. I instructed him to get up. He was only wearing sleeping shorts, and the top of his body was naked. He was quite tall and slender, but I noticed that even though he was slender, he was not thin.

His arm muscles flexed as he pushed himself up from the sofa. As he stood up, he ran for the door and managed to get outside. Three of us tried to subdue him, but his wiry body was wet, and we couldn't get a proper hold of him. He managed to wriggle himself free and ran towards the darkness behind the house.

Before he entered the darkness, I raised my R5 rifle and fired a shot. Instantly, he fell to the ground, groaning in pain. I

ran up to him, thinking I shot him in the back, which would cause big shit for me, but I noticed that I hit him on the coccyx. The slug had ricocheted off his coccyx and penetrated his stomach. He was still alive but in excruciating pain. My guys formed a perimeter around the house in the event that neighbours, friends or any other inquisitive people might come and cause trouble with us. I stood looking at the suspect whilst he was holding his stomach, now screeching in pain. He was purposefully loud as he wanted to alert others in a bid that they could come to his aid, but we were prepared for any resistance and wouldn't allow anyone near the scene or the house.

His girlfriend came running out of the house at the sound of the gunshot. She screamed hysterically as she ran towards her injured boyfriend, waving her arms in the air. One of my guys grabbed her and pushed her to the ground. She continued to scream uncontrollably, so he punched her in the face so hard that she passed out.

I stood over the body of the suspect, waiting for him to die before summoning the duty officer to the scene. It took about twenty minutes before I noticed that he had stopped breathing, and I knew then that he was dead. I called for backup, which is standard police procedure, and then asked the control room to notify the duty officer of the shooting incident.

A few days later, we received information that a suspect had left the area and had fled inland to a rural area where he was hiding in a shack. My guys identified the one-room shack where the suspect was hiding out. That night, we prepared ourselves to arrest this suspect and completed the usual ritual of having a few beers. We parked our vehicle a distance away and walked to the shack. It was a long walk as we had to cross a river and walk up a steep hill through paddocks and neighbouring properties. The houses in the rural areas are situated a distance apart, so the influence of onlookers and people's interference was limited.

We approached the shack quietly and took up our positions. I kicked the door in and ran into the shack with one of my guys. We found the suspect sleeping alone in a single bed, which took up most of the space in the room. I told him to get up and confirmed that he was one of the suspects we were looking for.

While he was putting a shirt on, I shot him twice in the chest. He died instantly and fell back on the bed. One of my guys handed me a firearm without ownership that had the serial number filed off, and I placed it in his right hand. I called for backup but did tell the radio operator that the situation was under control and that no backup was necessary. I asked her to notify the duty officer of the shooting incident.

My guys informed me that one suspect, who had relocated to another city, was going to catch a taxi from the location and go into town. The road between the location and the city had a double lane on each side, and it was a busy road. We planned that my guys would wait for him to get into a taxi and that they would contact me while I waited at a traffic light about five kilometres away. When the taxi stopped at the traffic light, I would affect the arrest. My guys would follow the taxi and provide backup at the traffic light. I waited near the traffic light until my guys told me that the suspect had entered the taxi, and they gave me a description of the taxi. The taxi drove along the main road, being followed by my guys.

As the taxi stopped at the traffic light, quite unaware of what was about to happen, I opened the sliding door of the taxi and shouted, “Police.”

Some of the occupants in the taxi started shouting out of fear, but I pushed my way into the taxi and identified my suspect. I grabbed him by the shirt and pulled him out of the taxi. I didn’t realise that this guy was so strong, and soon I found myself wrestling with him on the tarmac. I struggled to overpower him as we wrestled each other.

I hadn’t realised that we were underneath the taxi, and I managed to look up while I was on my back, and this suspect was on top of me. I noticed the taxi driver looking at me from his open window, and fortunately, he didn’t pull off despite the traffic light turning green.

I managed to overpower this suspect, and with the help of my guys, we pulled him from underneath the taxi. There was no time to search him, but I jumped in the backseat with the suspect. He was seated behind the driver, and I was seated behind the passenger seat. I forced my right elbow into his throat while I held my pistol firmly against his ribs. One of my guys climbed into the driver’s seat and drove off.

As we drove, the suspect tried to reach down, but I kept forcing his hands upwards. He said his shoes, meaning his shoelaces had come loose in the struggle, and he wanted to tie them, but I refused, keeping my elbow on his throat.

Suddenly, he lunged forward and reached for his feet and, in an instant, pulled a homemade firearm out from in his socks. He put the homemade firearm against the back of the driver's seat and pulled the trigger. Suddenly, I fired a single shot into his ribcage. The loud noise of the shot being fired in a confined space deafened me as the driver swerved the vehicle out of fright. The dead suspect fell forward and lay with his head against the back of the driver's seat.

Blood had splattered over me in my face, and I shouted to my guy to stop the vehicle. The vehicle suddenly swerved to the left and came to a standstill in the left lane. We climbed out of the vehicle and ensured that the suspect was dead. I recovered the homemade firearm on the floor between his feet and examined it. I found that the hammer had hit the back of the cartridge within a millimetre from the centre of the cartridge, which caused the shot to fail.

A few weeks passed before we established the identity and whereabouts of the last two suspects. It was confirmed that they were brothers and were in hiding in the Midlands, at the home of a relative. We established that there was no road leading to the house, and the best way to approach the house was to cross the Umkomaas River and walk up to the house, which is situated on a hill overlooking the river.

My commander was involved in the planning of this operation, not only because two suspects were hiding out in the same house but because we believed they were the most dangerous, ruthless members and were believed to be the leaders of this notorious gang. My commander instructed us, against my will, that an army platoon would be accompanying us on our mission to arrest the suspects.

We met the army platoon around midnight. This platoon consisted of young coloured men, probably from the Northern Cape, who appeared to be nervous just at the thought of being in the Midlands. I briefed them about the mission and cautioned them that the suspects were armed and highly dangerous. My

guys and I would lead, and their duty was to perform backup in the event of something going wrong. The army sergeant asked his platoon if they understood the mission and their roles during the mission and if they had any questions, but everyone remained silent.

We proceeded through a mountainous area that consisted mainly of farmlands until we were instructed to find a suitable place to park our vehicles. The air was crisp and cold, and the sky turned from black to dark blue towards the east. Otherwise, it was totally dark, without a burning light in sight. We took our automatic rifles from the boot of my vehicle and were ready to take a long walk along the mountain and then down to the river, where we would find a suitable place to cross.

My detectives and I led the way while the soldiers followed. We walked for at least an hour along a gravel road before the road started to twist itself down the mountain pass. Many of us were out of breath but remained silent, each of us in our own thoughts as to what we could expect. We continued down the twisted gravel road, which led us to the river embankment.

We arrived at a poled fence surrounding a cattle dip. In the dim light, I could see the house that we intended to penetrate. It was situated about two hundred meters from the riverbank, up against a hill that overlooked the river. I looked at the waters of the mighty Umkomaas and noticed that although the river was not in flood, the current was quite strong, and although the river was wide, this seemed to be the best place to cross.

My team and I lead the way. We entered the icy cold water and started to wade across. We managed to walk about a quarter of the distance until it was too deep and realised that in order to reach the other side, we had to swim. We reached the embankment on the other side about fifty meters downstream due to the strong current.

We positioned ourselves on the river bank to provide cover for the soldiers, who still had to cross. The soldiers started to cross the river, when their corporal called to me that one of his troops was in trouble. While they were crossing, the current swept him off his feet, and he had not surfaced yet. My team and I, agitated by the delay, went back into the water, only to find the soldier downstream from where we had exited the river. I

managed to pull him by his webbing until we reached the river bank. I called to the corporal that I had found him and that I thought he was dead. The corporal swam to where we were and tried to resuscitate him, but without success. He had been underwater too long and had drowned.

It was getting light, and we could not afford any more delays, so my team and I headed towards our target, leaving the soldiers behind to deal with their own. We walked slowly and quietly up the hill until we reached the house.

We took up our usual positions and crouched down. My sergeant stood at one window near the front door while I stood at the window on the opposite side of the door. We reached into our jackets and pulled out a stun grenade.

On my count, we smashed the window and threw the stun grenades through the windows. The grenade is designed to give off two loud bangs, which would disorientate the inhabitants, allow for less immediate resistance, and enable a better show of force when entering the house.

I kicked the door open, and we rushed inside. The house was full of smoke and screaming women and children. One woman was holding her toddler close to her chest whilst sitting on the floor. The toddler was screaming in pain, and I realised then that its face was burned. I had thrown the grenade through the window, and it fell on the toddler's head where she lay asleep.

Suddenly, the bedroom door flung open, and automatic gunfire filled the air. The noise was deafening. Visibility was obscured due to the amount of smoke that lay thick in the house. We dived for cover and immediately returned fire. Our semi-automatic rifles, on automatic, we fired at the bedroom door.

The suspects retreated inside the bedroom, and it went quiet for a moment. We stood up and ran towards the bedroom door and took cover on either side of it. I removed another stun grenade from my jacket, removed the pin and threw it inside the room.

Two loud bangs echoed through the house as we rushed into the bedroom, shooting blindly in all directions. Suddenly, all became quiet, and we ceased fire. When the smoke dissipated through the broken windows, we noticed that both suspects lay

dead on the floor, riddled with bullets, their firearms lying on the floor next to them.

We called for medical assistance and a duty officer. About thirty minutes later, a helicopter arrived and took the injured to hospital for treatment for burns and gunshot wounds.

This was possibly the biggest turning point of my career. I suffered from severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and was completely alone. My commanders were reluctant to send me for treatment or counselling out of fear that I would be medically boarded. My marriage was in ruins, and my wife had left me, taking our son with her. She couldn't stand my continuous drinking and mood swings any longer. I continued to investigate murders, but my philosophy changed towards perpetrators of violent crime. I developed an intense hatred towards murderers and criminals who attacked women and especially the elderly.

Every time I attended a scene of a senseless, brutal murder, something inside me died. I had become bitter and more ruthless after every gruesome scene. I felt the pain of the victims' families, often leaving them destitute as their lives had changed in an instant.

I also felt that hard-working, innocent, law-abiding people were being killed because some blacks had an attitude of entitlement. They were now in charge as the ANC was in power, and also, it was time for payback for the time they suffered under apartheid. I had seen too many mothers lose their children. Too many wives lose their husbands, and too many wives are raped by those who thought they had a right to do so or displayed tendencies of extreme hatred towards whites.

The courts no longer served as a deterrent to criminals. Within a few years of being sentenced, they would be released on parole, or they would be granted bail, only to retaliate against witnesses and the victim's family. Perpetrators didn't mind going to prison. It was like a holiday camp. They could lie and sleep all day and get fed. Some also treated prison like a college, where they would receive advice and learn from others. They would spend their time learning from other offenders. It also was an opportunity to network with other criminals.

I also shared the heartache and pain of the victim's family. They were so helpless in these situations; there was nothing they

could do except hope that I would apprehend the perpetrator, hope that he would not be granted bail, and hope the justice system would not fail them. Revenge was also very real, as the possibility of the perpetrators being released on bail and terrifying or harassing the family was very real. There was also fear that the perpetrator would be released on parole after only serving a fraction of his sentence. The deceased's family or witnesses would live in fear that the perpetrator would be discharged on a technicality.

Then was the question of the sentence. How long would he remain behind bars before he is released and come after them either out of revenge or because they testified against him, which was partly due to him being convicted in the first place? Many wives lost everything after the death of their husbands.

The husbands were usually the sole or main breadwinners, and often, the wife didn't want to live in the house where her husband had been murdered. Many moved away out of fear, leaving a perfectly good life, with friends, behind and having to start up again somewhere else, or a married couple having to deal with the wife having been raped and infected with aids. The trauma they have had to deal with is unimaginable, but I felt their pain and their anguish.

My job was pointless, I thought. I had put everything into my job, up to a point where I had lost my family, my self-worth and my honour, and for what? These perpetrators didn't deserve to live. They were not animals, animals don't behave this way, they were nothing but scum, and these barbarians didn't deserve to live. I decided to be the judge and executioner, and when I apprehended the perpetrators, they needed to die. I would adopt a steel-fist attitude and show no mercy. I was convinced that many, if not all, victims and family members would share the same sentiment.

These thoughts went through my head as I lay in my bed, trying desperately to fall asleep. I had become an emotional wreck but refused to give in. Alcohol made everything better, even if it was just for a while. I often arrived at work still drunk. During the morning lecture, I would lie on the couch in my commander's office due to the effects of the alcohol I had consumed the night before. Only once, when I was too drunk to walk straight at seven

in the morning, did my commander instruct one of the other detectives to take me home. Otherwise, I tried to hide my drunkenness and focus on the cases at hand. None of my commanders realised I had a problem, or maybe they did and chose to ignore it.

I was called to a shooting incident involving a garage owner. An armed male was robbing the shop at the garage when he arrived at work. As the owner, who was unaware that his shop was being robbed, walked around the corner of the building heading towards the shop, the perpetrator fled the shop and made off with a few hundred rand. Both reached the corner of the building at the same time, and the perpetrator suddenly, and for no reason, shot the owner once in the stomach, killing him instantly.

It wasn't long before I established the identity and whereabouts of the perpetrator. Late one night, I went to his single-room shack alone. I knocked on the door, and he asked who was there. As I am fluent in Zulu, I replied, "It's me." As he opened the door, I noticed that he was wearing a tee shirt with the words `Topac' written across the chest. I understood this meant `To PAC' (Pan African Congress); I became instantly angry, so I shot him twice in the chest and left. I learned later that `Topac' was a rapper, but this didn't change the way I felt about killing him.

Now, that was justice, I thought. And it was so easy. I realised that I couldn't just go on a killing spree without reporting the shooting incidents to my superiors, so when I killed a suspect, I would stage the scene and justify the shooting, often claiming self-defence. My commanders often turned a blind eye as they were not opposed to my beliefs and stance. I was ridding the community of violent criminals who robbed and stole from the poor in their own communities. The violent crime rate dropped, and not a week went by without a shooting or a violent crime being reported in the local paper. People started to feel safe in their homes, knowing that violent criminals were taken off the streets and sent to hell.

My commander took early retirement, and I applied for the position of Branch commander, but my application was unsuccessful. I deserved that position. I was qualified, had

undergone all the necessary training, and had the work experience. Instead, a woman from the child protection unit was allocated the position. This was a very bitter pill to swallow. Not only did she have no experience in violent crime, but unlike me, she had never held the position of Branch commander. This was a typical "transformation appointment."

I was handed a case where a family was fishing at the estuary on a popular river on the far lower south coast. While the young husband, wife and their two sons were enjoying the day at the river, they were approached by three armed males, who crawled out of a nearby bush and walked towards them. The male demanded their money and firearms. The terrified husband handed over his wallet, not wanting any trouble but also to safeguard his young family. One of the males took the wallet from him and ordered the other two accomplices to tie him to a nearby tree with the two young boys, which they did using fishing gut which cut into their arms and wrists. One assailant then pulled the wife by the hair, closer to where the husband and two children were tied, and threw her on the ground. She screamed in horror as she knew what to expect next. He pulled her clothes from her wriggling body, exposing her naked body. He then began to rape her. When he was done, the other two took turns raping her in full view of the husband and children.

They left her crying on the ground, and a distraught husband and children still tied to a tree and ran away with the wallet.

On my arrival at the scene, the wife was being interviewed by another lady detective, who obtained her statement. The two young boys, who were still in hysterics, crying uncontrollably, were receiving trauma counselling, and I had to deal with the husband. He was a broken man. He found it difficult to fight back the tears while telling me about the events that unfolded and reliving their ordeal. I suggested that he also receive trauma counselling and that he had the nylon cuts to his wrist attended to by the paramedics who were already on site. The pain and grief in his eyes said it all, and I knew what I needed to do.

I focused all my time and energy on this case because I had to solve it. The picture of the husband's eyes when he looked at me kept flashing through my mind, and I could feel his anguish, his pain and his hatred.

A few weeks later, I established who the main culprit was. He was known as Sipho and was well-known in the community as a feared and hardened criminal. I also established his whereabouts in a nearby location. I drove there one evening and knocked at the door of his two-roomed house. The door was opened by a young lady who told me he wasn't at home. He was at a nearby shebeen, and she only expected him back later. I drove to the shebeen and stopped my car outside. The music was loud, and drunken men were talking and laughing loudly. I walked inside and noticed two boys playing pool on a pool table which stood in the corner. Some guys came up to me in a drunken stupor and greeted me, while others ignored my presence and continued with their conversations.

I walked to the steel-enclosed counter and ordered a beer, which I drank standing at the counter. I looked around for anyone who was acting nervously, but nobody took any notice of me and continued as they had before I arrived. I called the bartender closer when I had almost finished my beer, and I asked him if Sipho was among his patrons.

He pointed to the guy in the corner with the red shirt. I finished my beer, placed the bottle on the counter and walked towards the corner. Sipho looked at me as I walked towards him, got up from his seat and ran towards the entrance. I chased after him as he left the building, running down a dirt path just wide enough for a vehicle to travel on. I ran after him. He briefly looked over his shoulder and saw me chasing him.

He suddenly turned to the right and ran up a pathway that led between houses, but I stayed in pursuit. He jumped a wire fence and ran through a yard, and suddenly, a dog ran after him and grabbed him by the legs, and he fell to the ground. I chased the dog away, although I was grateful for the assistance.

Breathing heavily, I pulled him up and pulled him close to me. He started throwing punches at my face in an attempt to flee, and I pulled the trigger of my pistol twice, aimed at his abdomen. He fell to the ground with a loud yell.

Suddenly, lights came on in the house, and I heard people talking inside. The front door opened, and an old man came out armed with a *knobkerrie*. I quickly identified myself, and he lowered the *knobkerrie* but still walked towards me to investigate what had just happened. When he saw Sipho lying dead on the

ground, he smiled and nodded his head. Without saying a word, he turned around and went back inside.

I called the duty room and asked the radio operator to notify the officer on call of the shooting incident. While I waited at the scene, a group arrived to see what had just happened. Most were just inquisitive, while the younger men, who had been drinking, were becoming aggressive towards me, accusing me of killing their friend for no reason.

One started shouting, inciting the others, saying; "Look, Sipho was killed for nothing by this white dog; he doesn't even have a gun or a knife on him."

The crowd started to get unruly, and I tried to calm them down, but they weren't interested in listening to me. Fortunately, the old man and owner of the house heard what was going on and came outside, waving his *knobkerrie*. He started to shout at the bystanders and told them to get off his property.

About thirty minutes later, I saw car lights approaching me in the distance. When the car came closer, I realised that it was my new commander. She climbed out of her car with her notepad in hand. She looked at Sipho and realised that he was dead. She asked me to explain to her, in detail, what had happened. While I spoke, she made notes of everything I said.

She then told me that I had shot an unarmed man and that she would have to investigate this matter. She also warned me that once she had completed her investigation, she would take it up with the Director of Public Prosecutions. The Crime Scene Investigator photographed the body, and it was removed to the government mortuary.

I received information that there would be an armed robbery at a fast-food outlet in Durban. The driver of the getaway vehicle told me that two of his friends would be involved in the robbery. After the robbery, he would drive them to his home, where they would share the cash. He supplied me with all the information I needed, such as dates and times.

On this day in question, I parked my vehicle in front of the fast-food outlet and waited. It was just before closing that I noticed two suspicious-looking males, wearing hoodies to cover their faces, entering the fast-food outlet. Suddenly, I noticed one male had a pistol in his right hand, which he pointed at the teller.

I noticed her opening the till and handing him a handful of notes. He stuffed the notes in his trouser pocket and casually walked out of the fast-food outlet.

As they walked on the sidewalk towards me, I drew my pistol, aimed and fired twice, killing both of them instantly. I walked to the two men to ensure they were dead. Both had been shot in the chest, killing them instantly. Again, I notified the control room and required the radio operator to notify the duty officer of the shooting incident. I covered the bodies with plastic from the boot of my car, while pedestrians gathered around to take a closer look.

A while later, the duty officer arrived, and I was horrified to see it was my unit commander, who I knew had her knife out for me. She approached me with her writing pad and asked for an explanation. I explained that I was in my vehicle when I noticed the armed robbery in progress. As the suspects fled the scene, I fired two shots, killing them both.

"So if you had information about the robbery prior to it happening, what steps did you take to prevent it from happening in the first place?" she asked, looking me straight in the eye.

"Well, nothing. A robbery happened, and I killed the perpetrators, that's all," I said as I turned around and walked away.

"I will be investigating this shooting; you can be sure of that." She shouted at me from a distance as she walked towards her vehicle on the opposite side of the road.

I was notified that an elderly lady had found her friend and neighbour murdered in her home in a small Drakensberg town. The report was that this lady visited her neighbour every Tuesday, where they would enjoy a cup of tea and a chat. This was also her way of checking on her neighbour, as she was eighty-two years old and lived alone. She had walked over that morning and found her neighbour lying in the lounge, covered in blood.

On my arrival, I interviewed the lady who had discovered the body of her friend, and she confirmed the reports I had received earlier. The house was cordoned off with official crime scene tape, and the uniformed constable had told me that nobody had entered the crime scene and that the victim was still where she had been found.

I entered through the front door and was suddenly overwhelmed by the smell of stale blood, decaying flesh and cat pee. I walked towards the lady, who lay on her back on the lounge floor and noticed that her face had been eaten. Flesh from her cheeks had been ripped off in chunks, and her eyes had been gouged out. There must have been at least ten cats in the house, and they all ran out of the front door when I left it open. The victim's dress and petticoat had been pulled up over her body, and her underwear pulled down to her knees. It was obvious that she had been raped.

I examined the body and noticed multiple stab wounds to her chest and abdomen. Her pretty floral but old blouse was covered in blood, and she lay in a pool of blood, indicating that that was where she had been killed. I searched the house for any forced entry, but all the windows and doors were locked. Nothing out of the ordinary was missing, and I came to the conclusion that this was a sexually motivated crime committed by someone known to the victim.

I interviewed the neighbour again, and she told me that they had been neighbours for about twenty years. The deceased lived alone as her husband passed away several years ago. She explained that the deceased had a domestic maid many years ago, and this maid had a little boy, born out of wedlock, about five years old, called Gabriel. The maid and her son lived in the servants' quarters until the maid died of AIDS.

The little boy had nowhere to go, so the deceased raised him. She put him through school, and eventually, when he became a teenager, she moved him into the servants' quarters.

When Gabriel grew up, he worked in the garden on weekends before being allowed to go out with his mates. She clothed and fed him throughout his schooling and had planned to send him to university.

He was well-spoken, and she treated him like she would her own son. She had spoken to her friend about the dangers of having him there as he grew older, but she said she liked having him around if she needed him to run an errand and said that he was good security for her. I looked for Gabriel in his room but saw that it was locked. I knew I had to find this Gabriel. I was sure he would be able to shed some light on this heinous crime.

I drove with my team to a nearby location where his late mother was from and made enquiries regarding his whereabouts. It didn't take us long to find him staying with an aunt, his late mother's sister.

We found Gabriel lying on a sofa in the lounge, watching television. He was quite relaxed and cooperative. We pulled him out of his aunt's home and placed him into the unmarked minibus. I was under the impression that he was expecting us. Gabriel, who had completed his schooling a year or two ago, was slender and well-spoken. He did not fit the profile of a murderer, and I wondered what his involvement in this murder could be.

As we prepared to question him about the rape and murder, he told us that he knew everything and was willing to assist us. He begged us not to hurt him. He emphasised that there was no need to hit him, as he would cooperate with us. He explained in detail what had happened on that cold winter's night a week previously. He said that his friend David suggested they rob the deceased, and he went along with it. At no stage did he suspect that David would rape and murder the old lady, as they had agreed only to rob her.

He had initially refused to go along with the idea of robbing her, but David threatened to beat him if he didn't participate. He told us that his friend had visited him after work and smoked dagga in his room. The deceased didn't like friends visiting late, and they both knew the visit would soon be cut short as it was already dark. They shared the joint of dagga, when David suggested they rob the old lady as they needed money. Gabriel had initially thought the idea was ludicrous as he had known her all his life, and she had brought him up, but it was only when David threatened him that he agreed to participate.

Gabriel explained that once they had smoked the dagga, David suggested that Gabriel walk into the house through the back door. David knew that the deceased kept Gabriel a plate of food, which she would leave in the stove warming drawer for him. He had to get into the house under the pretext of getting his dinner and would need to ensure that it was safe to rob her. David would then enter through the back door, which Gabriel would leave unlocked, and he would rob her of jewellery and cash. They agreed to share all the proceeds, which they expected would be worth thousands.

Gabriel walked into the kitchen as planned, and on entering the kitchen, he heard her calling out from the lounge, “Gabriel, is that you?”

With a lump in his throat, knowing what was going to happen, all he could say was; “Yes, ma’am.” Gabriel walked over to the stove and opened the warming drawer whilst David slipped in through the back door. David walked into the adjacent lounge and found the old lady seated on her favourite chair, eating dinner off a small fold-up table in front of her. Her favourite `soapie’ was on the television set, so she didn’t notice David enter into the lounge. David crept behind her and struck her on the back of the head with a half brick. The blow was sudden and unexpected, and with a loud moan, she fell to the floor in front of her chair. The force of the blow to the head had forced the food out of her mouth, and her dentures lay on the floor near her motionless body.

Gabriel could hear her moaning in pain on the floor, and he realised she was still alive. He walked into the lounge to offer assistance, and saw David sitting on top of her, stabbing her in the chest. The old lady tried to ward off the blows but was too weak to fight off the twenty-five-year-old male on top of her. Gabriel watched as blood gushed from her chest and soon her lifeless body lying on the floor. He was horrified by what he had just witnessed, as this is not what they had planned to do to the old lady. This was supposed to be a simple robbery, where David would take whatever he could, and they would share the proceeds. Gabriel didn’t want to be part of this or witness any more of this brutal attack, so he ran out of the house and waited for David in his room.

A while later, David walked calmly into Gabriel’s room. He gloated at his achievement and pulled a wad of ten and twenty rand notes from his trouser pocket. Gabriel felt sick in his stomach when he saw what she had been so brutally killed for.

He and David decided to lock the house, as they knew it would be a long time before her body was discovered. They heard the old lady still alive when they walked back into the house to ensure all windows and curtains were closed. Under her breath, she faintly called out to Gabriel for help. David realised that she was still alive and might miraculously survive the attack, so he ran outside and found a garden fork leaning against the wall

near the back door. He grabbed the garden fork and ran to the deceased. He stood over her bleeding body and forced the garden fork into her abdomen. He stood over her for a while until he was sure she was dead. Gabriel locked the back door with his key, and they left, agreeing to meet later at Bra G's shebeen. Later that night, they met at Bra G's shebeen, as arranged, where David handed him fifty rand.

When we asked about David's whereabouts, he told us that the day following the incident, David caught a taxi to Joburg to his uncle's home in Soweto. He told us that he had been there once before with David but didn't know the address. We told him that he would have to come with us to Joburg and point out the house.

On our arrival in Jabulani Township, he told us to stop and pointed the house out to us. We left him handcuffed to the seat and proceeded to the house. We knocked on the front door, which an elderly, well-dressed man opened. I asked if I could speak with David, and he let us in with a smile. We followed this elderly gentleman to a bedroom at the end of the passage.

He knocked on the closed door and said; "David. Some gentlemen are here to see you."

David called from behind the closed door; "Let them in." The gentleman opened the door for us, and we entered the room.

We found David lying on the bed without a shirt on. I told him who we were and that we needed to talk to him. He just lay there with a smirk on his face. I walked towards him and pulled him up by the arm. He tried to resist my grip by wriggling his upper body from side to side. He kept on smiling arrogantly at me. I pulled him again by his arm, and he tried to shrug me off, but with the assistance of my fellow detectives, we managed to get him off the bed. He fell to the floor and refused to get up, so we pulled him to his feet.

"Get dressed," I ordered, but he refused. He said he had done nothing wrong and wasn't going anywhere. I grabbed him around the neck and pulled him outside. He struggled to get free, but my grip on him was too tight. I pulled him to the side of the house, where I pulled out my firearm and shot him once in the head. He fell to the ground with a look of shock in his eyes.

I notified the control room of the shooting, and after about an hour, a vehicle arrived on site. A young detective climbed out of his car and swaggered over to where the deceased lay on his back. He introduced himself to me as Constable Andre Roux. He called me to one side and asked what had happened. I told him that we were affecting an arrest. The suspect resisted, so my team went to the vehicle to get teargas to subdue the suspect. While I was alone with the suspect, he attacked me and tried to disarm me. In the struggle, I shot him. The young constable looked at the deceased, turned to me, and said; "No, Captain. I don't believe that you had to shoot and kill this man when there were other detectives present who could assist you in arresting him. I'm placing you under arrest for murder."

He made me turn around and placed handcuffs on me. I was placed in the back of his vehicle and taken to the police holding cells, where I was detained.

When I entered the cells, I made it very clear to the uniformed cell commander and his staff that I was also a policeman and that I had not been convicted of anything. I was fortunate that I wasn't placed in the same holding cell as hardened criminals, and the cell officer instructed that I should be kept with less serious offenders. I was in a cell with another guy who had been arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol, and a guy who had been arrested for domestic violence. Both appeared to be well-spoken and well-mannered. Neither of them had been arrested before. I told my inmates that this was just a holding cell until our court appearance, and I wouldn't be returning here. There were no beds in the cell, just a cell mat and a hard grey blanket to sleep on the cold cement floor. I was later charged with murder, my fingerprints were taken, and I was entered into an arrest register.

The following day, I was placed in the back of a police van and taken to the court holding cells. I appeared before the magistrate, who ordered that I be remanded to prison for seven days for a bail application.

After seven days, all inmates who attended court that day were placed in the back of a Canter Van and driven to court. We were placed in the holding cell and fed warm, weak tea and a quarter loaf of bread, which I insisted on, as I was no longer a first-timer, and I deserved some respect and wanted my bread. I

waited for my name to be called, and eventually, I was hauled up the stairs that led from the cells to the court and placed in the dock before the magistrate.

The magistrate said to me that the investigation was still incomplete and that my matter was remanded for thirty days for further investigation, and I was to remain in custody. I asked if I could address the court, as I was representing myself, and the magistrate agreed. I objected to the remand and reminded the magistrate that I was entitled to a speedy trial. Secondly, I was not a flight risk, and I could not interfere with any witnesses. I asked that he could grant me bail as I had personal responsibilities to attend to. The magistrate looked at the public prosecutor for a response.

She stood up and addressed the court. “Your Honour, this is a very serious offence. It has also come to my attention that the accused has two other pending cases in Kwa Zulu Natal, and it is not in the interests of justice that the accused be released from custody at this time.”

I was surprised that I had two other cases pending against me. I objected, saying that I had not been charged with any other crimes and that this was the only one I was aware of. The magistrate refused to look at me and only said; “Case postponed for further investigation, and you will remain in custody.”

Again, I objected and addressed the court. “Your Honour, as you are aware, I am a serving member of the South African Police Service. If you decide that I should remain in custody, it is my submission that I be detained in the police cells and not in prison, as my life would be in danger at the prison,” I pleaded.

The magistrate looked at me briefly and thought about my application for a moment before replying; “You will be remanded to the Sandton police cells for a period of seven days until your next appearance. Is that understood?” I nodded my head and was relieved to go to the police cells and not the prison.

A few days passed, and I met some interesting characters, all of whom only spent one night in the cell. I was fortunate that the staff working in the cells remembered me and understood that I was innocent until proven guilty. So, my treatment was as good as it would get.

Late one afternoon, I heard my cell door being unlocked, and Chris [see `Part Two’] walked in. I was so surprised to see

him; we walked towards each other, and I gave him a big bear hug. “What are you doing here, Chris?” I asked him.

We walked together into the cell and sat on the floor. He told me that he had been booked out of prison for further investigation. Police were now thinking of adding another count of cruelty to animals to his charge sheet. He smiled while telling me this, so I thought that he was probably relieved to be out of prison and also preferred being detained in the police cells, or he knew the new charges were just trumped up and would never stick.

We spoke about our time together in prison and the strange characters we met there. Chris asked me if I had heard the news, and I asked him about what. He told me that Jan [See `Part Two’] managed to “borrow” the sharp object from that boy who fatally stabbed a foreigner, and he took the sharp object to the bathroom, where he stabbed himself repeatedly in the jugular. He didn’t make a sound. It was only when one of the inmates went to the bathroom that his body was found on the floor. He bled out, and nobody knew.

“Shit!” I thought. Now, no one will ever know the truth behind his missing son and the other missing children. Bummer!

Constable Roux visited me in the cells. With an arrogant attitude, he told me that `you’ Murder and Robbery Detectives think `you’re clever’ and that this is Joburg, not Durban. He will show me how to investigate a case. He welcomed me to Joburg and said that this would be my new home, for the rest of my life. I told him to fuck off and continue investigating his shoplifting cases and leave the serious cases for us big men.

Constable Andre Roux and I never saw eye to eye. Often, he came into my cell just to piss me off, but one day I decided to catch this little fucker out with his own game. I told him that I wanted him to grant me bail and that I would cooperate with him. He agreed that if I supplied him with an affidavit stating exactly what happened under oath, he would arrange bail for me at my next court appearance. I agreed and asked him to bring me paper and a pen, which he did. I wrote out the entire statement, describing what had happened. I signed it and also wrote out the commissioner's oath. The following day, he was surprised that I had actually written a statement. He gladly accepted it and filled

it in the docket, thinking that I was now so screwed and a conviction was imminent.

A month later, I appeared before the magistrate again, and again, he remanded the matter, but this time, it was for a trial date, as the state was now ready to proceed against me. I addressed the magistrate, as I was representing myself, and informed him that I needed bail, as the case against me was weak and the likelihood of convicting me was slim. The magistrate looked at the prosecutor, and she jumped up to address him.

"Your honour, the state has a very good case against the accused. The accused also submitted a statement to the investigating officer in which he implicated himself. He will perjure himself if this statement isn't true as it was taken, and signed before a commissioner of oaths."

The magistrate looked at me to respond. "Your Honour. The statement was made by me and signed by me, but when signing the statement, I didn't take the oath to a commissioner of oaths that the statement was true and binding to my conscience. Furthermore, according to the Commissioner of Oaths Act, the deponent needs to take an oath in the presence of a Commissioner of Oaths, and swear to the Commissioner of Oaths that he knows and understands the contents of the affidavit, he has no objection to taking the oath, and that the oath is binding to his conscience."

The magistrate listened intently to my argument when suddenly, the prosecutor jumped up again. "Your Honour, the accused understood the contents of the statement when signing it in the presence of the investigating officer because he wrote the statement himself," she stated, the tone of her voice sounding a little irritated.

"Your Honour, also the Commissioner of Oaths needs to confirm that he obtained the affidavit, that the deponent knows and understands the contents thereof, and that the deponent's signature is placed thereupon in his presence."

The magistrate nodded, saying that he knew the law but wondered where I was going with my argument. "Your Honour, if you examine my affidavit, you will notice that I wrote the Commissioner of Oaths Certificate where the Commissioner of Oaths certifies that he obtained the statement and that the oath

was taken, and not the investigating officer." I heard the prosecutor mumble to herself.

"Your Honour, the state then requests a remand for a formal bail application."

The magistrate nodded his head in agreement and said to the prosecutor; "Ms Moodley, I sincerely hope that you are not basing your case on the affidavit. Case remanded to Friday for a bail application."

I went back to my cell and wondered when Constable Roux would visit me again. I wanted to see his frustration, knowing that I had outsmarted him.

The evening that followed, I was alone in my cell, lying on my mattress, when my cell door opened, and three guys walked in. They wore black bunny jackets, and on the back was printed in gold: `Cops for Christ.' One had a banjo, the other a little drum and the third, a rattle thing. They asked if they could sing and pray for me, to which I had no objection. Within a few minutes, they left my cell, never to be seen again.

That night, I got down on my knees and prayed. I knew I was in trouble, and I didn't know what lay ahead, so I asked God for his forgiveness and mercy. I promised to turn from my ways and have a peace dove tattooed on my back as a reminder of who I was and how he had saved me.

At my next court appearance, the prosecutor withdrew the charges against me, as the investigator, Constable Andre Roux, had committed suicide and evidence that was kept behind lock and key had miraculously disappeared. I had been incarcerated for one hundred and fourteen days.

I arrived back at my office a few days later. By this time, my commander had heard that the charges had been withdrawn against me and that I was a free man. She called me into her office after the morning lecture and told me that I was under arrest for two counts of murder in Durban and one count of murder on the lower south coast.

She handcuffed me and took me to the Regional Court in Durban to appear before a magistrate. She placed me in the court holding cells together with other detainees while we waited to appear before the magistrate.

I was eventually called to the dock by the cell guard on duty. When I arrived in the court building above the holding cell, I was led to the dock. As I sat waiting for the magistrate to make an appearance, I was approached by one of my detectives who sat amongst the audience.

He said, “Sir, be careful. This woman wants you to go to jail for a long time because she thinks you can get the position of commander. She wants to hold on to that position because she is the only female Murder and Robbery Commander in the country. But don’t worry, Sir. I was with her when she obtained a statement from the driver of the getaway car, so I know where he lives. One night the guys and I paid him a visit, but don’t worry, he’s now swimming with the fishes at the bottom of the ocean. So don’t worry.” He grabbed me by the arm and smiled.

He abruptly turned around and walked out of the courtroom. I felt a tear in my eye and a lump in my throat as I watched him leave. I was speechless. I didn’t even say thank you and show my appreciation.

I appeared before the magistrate, who remanded the case for trial. The magistrate felt that I met all the requirements and criteria for release, so I was released on warning. My commander, on the other hand, wanted to oppose bail and have me remanded in custody until the matter was heard in court.

We drove back in silence until I said; “Captain, when last did you see Samuel?” She looked at me, surprised that I would ask her that. “I heard he’s dead.” Her jaws tensed as she bit hard on her teeth. She stared at the road ahead of her without replying. I knew her mind was racing as she wondered how I knew and if he was dead or if I was playing mind games with her. At my next appearance, the charges were withdrawn against me. The public prosecutor produced a flight booking to Scotland with the witness's name on it.

A few days passed. The guys at the unit were happy to see me, but everyone noticed a change in me. All my anger had disappeared, and I wasn’t drinking nearly as much. They listened to my testimony, and I began to convince the guys of God’s goodness, and no matter what we go through in our lives, He will always love us and never forsake us. We should give Him all the praise and all the glory, every day, no matter what we are going

through. He spared me and protected me so many times, even before I was saved.

I went to a prominent tattoo artist and had a peace dove tattooed on my back in honour of Him. I realised that God had saved me so many times when I was a sinner; how much more would He do for me when I gave my life to Him?

A few weeks passed, and I was just relaxing at home when Captain Ilsa Crombrink arrived and parked her car outside. She hooted instead of getting out of her car and coming to the door.

I walked outside and greeted her. Without greeting back, she said; "You're under arrest for murder. Come with me."

I locked my house and walked outside. She made me turn around and placed handcuffs on me, which was totally unnecessary, but she enjoyed her little power trip and ultimately wanted to embarrass me in any way she could. She opened the back door of her car and pushed me into the back of her car.

When we arrived at court, she placed me in the holding cell, and I had to appear before the magistrate. I waited there with other detainees until my name was called. I was led into the accused's dock and stood before a magistrate who knew me well. The magistrate had heard some of my cases previously, and I had testified before him.

He said; "Captain, I am transferring this matter to Court C as I am not able to hear this matter. I know you too well, and my judgement will not be impartial." He gave me a date to appear in Court C. I was released on my own recognisance.

That Thursday, my name was all over the front pages of the local paper. I had gone from hero to villain overnight. What also annoyed me was how quickly the media could sell my soul for profit. My young son was also affected by my arrest as he was teased at school about his dad being a "crook."

I appeared in court on the next court date and the magistrate postponed the matter for trial. I was still out on warning, much to the disgust and disapproval of my commander.

On the following court date, the matter was remanded again, and so it went on for two years. I was not able to get a job as no one knew if I would be convicted.

Towards the end of the second year of attending court, the state started to call its witnesses. First was the pathologist who examined the body. Then, the crime scene investigator, then the old man who owned the property where the incident occurred. The final witness and most important witness for the state was Captain Ilsa Crombrink. As we approached the end of the week, the matter was set down for the following week for her testimony.

I was not aware that Captain Ilsa Crombrink was invited to Oribi Gorge by members of the task force. They intended to abseil down the sheer cliffs on a routine exercise. She gladly accepted their offer, and I heard later that she fell at least one hundred meters to her death.

I appeared in court on the next court date, and the state closed its case. I was found not guilty, and I was discharged.

Constable Christo Nel was one of the youngest detectives in the unit. His sole ambition was to become a Murder and Robbery detective. He proved his worth in the local detective branch, and his dedication didn't go unnoticed. He was overjoyed when, after his third or fourth application for a transfer, his application was finally successful.

Constable Nel was in my squad as the previous commander believed that I could mentor him. After a few months, he was finally handed a murder case, which he had to investigate.

Constable Nel was so excited, and I watched how many hours he spent trying to solve his very first murder case. A farmer had been murdered in the Swartberg area. It was deemed a priority due to the publicity farm murders were receiving. Weeks went by without any information, and pressure was mounting that he solved this case. I suggested to him that he offer a reward for any information leading to the arrest and conviction of the perpetrators. I saw how his face lit up with excitement at my suggestion.

I got to know Constable Nel's wife and two young boys. His wife was also a constable stationed in the uniform branch performing admin duties. His two young boys, aged five and six, were in school and pre-school. It was tough for the Nels, as

money was always tight as they tried to get by on their meagre salaries.

Constable Nel recruited an informant who worked on the farm where this incident took place. He told me that he needed to draw cash from the unit's fund to pay for this informer's travel and to follow up on certain information. The necessary paperwork was done, and he was handed eight hundred and fifty rand.

A day or so later, Constable Nel handed me a receipt for this money, in which this informant, only known as MR107, acknowledged receipt of the cash. As this informant was illiterate, he was required to place his thumbprint on the receipt, which then needed to be acknowledged by two witnesses. Constable Nel told me that he was alone when handing the informant this money and asked if I could sign as the second witness that he had received the money, which I did.

A few weeks passed. Our unit commander called Constable Nel to her office and advised him that he needed to report to the provincial commander at 15:00 that day. He seemed quite puzzled, but knew better than to disobey her instruction. The gossip at the office was that Constable Nel would be rapped over the knuckles for not solving the case, but none of us gave it much thought.

That evening, around seven, I received a text from Constable Nel. He explained that he was seated at the back of a provincial unit vehicle and that he was on his way to our office.

He explained that he had been questioned about paying informer MR107, that he had not paid the informer yet, and that the cash was in his desk drawer. He had not stolen the money but kept it in his desk until he had an appropriate time to pay him. He forged the receipt and placed his toeprint on it. He intended to submit a receipt as police regulations require an informer to be paid within seven days.

Failing that, the cash needed to be returned, and, at a later stage, a detailed motivation needed to be submitted before claiming for the same informant. Constable Nel asked me to place the cash in his drawer and that he should arrive at the office within an hour. I knew I could not call or reply to his text message, but his request was clear. Fortunately, my wife, at the time, had

financial sense and money stashed away for emergencies, so I could meet his request.

Constable Nel could not be charged with theft as he had no intention of permanently depriving the informant of his money, but he was charged with fraud. I was grateful that I was not charged as an accomplice as my explanation was satisfactory, and I did not know the informant. Constable Nel's career came to a sudden and abrupt end. As he was a first-time offender, the court ruled that he was sentenced to six months imprisonment, wholly suspended for five years.

The number of white members dwindled as they were replaced with inexperienced black members who were promoted at will. All promotions of white members were suspended indefinitely.

A friend and colleague whom I had known for many years told me that he was being treated for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. He had never been a detective and spent his entire career in the uniform branch. He continued to explain that his general practitioner had placed him on sick leave, and he was to undergo psychiatric treatment at a clinic in Pretoria. He would undergo treatment for three weeks, and the psychiatrist would recommend he be discharged with PTSD. This injury would be deemed to have been caused whilst on duty, so he would be entitled to all his benefits, including a monthly salary and full medical. Because this injury occurred whilst on duty, he would also be entitled to claim against his personal life and disability insurance. He told me he would be better off financially on a pension than if he continued working. He was scheduled to be admitted to the clinic the following week and was excited to start the boarding process. He told me that officers with less experience than me were being boarded with PTSD.

This was very exciting news, and the more I thought about it, the better it sounded. I needed to be relieved of my duties before disciplinary action was taken against me, which would mean that I could get fired and lose all my benefits. The following day, I had an appointment with my general practitioner and reported some PTSD symptoms to him. He booked me off sick and referred me to the psychiatric clinic in Pretoria.

After a simple phone call, I was scheduled to visit Dr Viljoen [Dr Anton Potgieter] in three weeks' time. I grew more excited as the days went by, and soon, it was time for me to pack my bags and get ready to depart for Pretoria.

I arrived at the upmarket clinic an hour before my appointment. I walked along the elegantly paved entrance and noticed how well the gardens were kept. Statues were strategically placed around the garden, and the trees were trimmed and well-shaped. Lush, expensive-looking grass had been planted between the flagstones leading to massive French doors with stained glass. The only sound was that of cheerful birds in the surrounding trees.

I entered through the massive French doors and, for a moment, thought I was entering an exclusive hotel in Sandton. The highly polished porcelain tiles reflected the lush green palms in massive clay pots. Classical music filled the air, giving this clinic a tranquil and calm atmosphere.

I walked to the reception desk carrying two small bags over my shoulder. A plump but pretty middle-aged lady smiled as she noticed me. I kept looking at my surroundings in awe of its pristine and elegant beauty. "Name, please?" she asked, in a heavy Afrikaans accent.

I replied, and she turned to a diary that was open beside her. "Oh yes. Please take a seat. The doctor will be with you shortly."

I sat on an expensive padded chair that suited the decor and looked at a glass table with various National Geographics that lay neatly scattered on the table. I had hardly made myself comfortable when the receptionist approached me and told me to follow her.

We walked down a passage flanked by doors on either side until she approached a closed door to the right and knocked gently. "Yes" was the response from inside, and she opened the door and gestured that I should enter.

Behind a highly polished oak table, a well-groomed man looked up at me as I walked into his office. "Please take a seat," he said, standing up from behind his desk and greeting me.

He pulled a notepad closer and began to ask me a series of questions. Judging from his line of questioning, I assumed that he was finding out more about my background; which unit I was in,

how many years of service I had and how many gruesome scenes I had attended. He then wanted to establish what the effects my career had on me.

Just when I thought my thirty-minute consultation had ended, he handed me a questionnaire and told me that my answers should be the first thing to come to mind. I completed the fifty questions and handed him the questionnaire. I sat in my chair, wondering about his findings as he studied my answers.

After some consideration, he sat back in his chair and told me that I was not fit to be a police officer and that he would recommend immediate boarding. I smiled to myself but let him continue uninterrupted.

Dr Viljoen looked down at his writing pad as he spoke. “We would need to admit you for a week for a full and thorough psychiatric evaluation.” I nodded in agreement, knowing that his recommendation would be in my best interests and that it was essential for me to be discharged with all my benefits.

“Mrs Nortje at reception will direct you to the ward. I will see you again tomorrow at 10, and I’ve prescribed medication that you will need to take immediately.”

I nodded and excused myself. Mrs Nortje led me past a swimming pool and past a classroom of about twenty patients. We continued to the bottom of the garden until we arrived at a neat face brick building.

We entered the building, which was a ward for males. I was handed to an overweight black sister who welcomed me to the facility. She led me down a corridor until we arrived at a vacant room. She told me to unpack and report back to her. I unpacked my clothes into a small but neat, built-in cupboard and walked back to the sister.

“There are rules here that you must comply with. Firstly, your medication. All patients stand in a queue twice a day, and I will hand them their medication. You need to swallow your medication, and I will ensure you have swallowed your medication by checking your mouth. Breakfast is at 08:00, and you will resume classes at 08:30 until lunch at 13:00. Don’t forget to keep your doctor’s appointment, which is also written on the board in the reception area. At 14:00, you will lie down until 16:00, and dinner is served at 19:00. You are allowed to watch television, but its `lights out’ at 22:00, understood?”

She turned back to a steel cabinet and unlocked it. After dispensing medication from a variety of containers, she handed me a variety of pills and a glass of water. I glanced at the variety of different shapes and colours of the twenty-odd pills and shoved them in my mouth. The sister stood watching my every move.

Once I had managed to swallow the handful of pills, she told me to open my mouth and move my tongue around for her to inspect.

"Follow me," was all she said before leading me to a classroom near the swimming pool. She opened the door and introduced me to Mrs Verster, who welcomed me and showed me to a vacant seat.

"Today, we are painting by numbers," she told me. She handed me an A4 sheet of paper and a variety of different coloured pencils. I looked at my classmates and noticed how intensively they were busy with the project at hand. Some of these grown men concentrated so hard it made their brows wrinkle; others had their tongues out as they concentrated, whilst others were so hard at work that they were only centimetres from their page.

Within about thirty minutes, I started to feel the effect of the morning medication and realised then why these grown men were acting so strangely. I started acting in the same way, as this task was intense and needed my full attention. At lunch, we stood in a line while we were served lunch on a tray. Lunch had far exceeded my expectations. It consisted of a piece of roast chicken, roast potato, mixed veg and rice with a thick, rich gravy. Jelly and custard was served separately in a disposable plastic container. All the utensils were made of plastic. I made myself comfortable at a table with three other patients. We chatted briefly between mouthfuls, and I was told that they were both stationed at Unit 19, which was a riot control unit that travelled the country, depending on where unrest was most prevalent.

After lunch, we lazed around the pool, and I took advantage of talking to some of the guys. One guy told me that he attempted suicide. He drank a bottle of vodka before sitting inside his vehicle, which was idling with a hose connected to the exhaust pipe and in the passenger window. He sat inside the car waiting to die, but didn't. After a while, he decided to speed up

the process by accelerating along the freeway. In his intoxicated state, he drove along the freeway but didn't get too far before being pulled off by the highway patrol. The patrolmen decided to admit him for depression rather than charge him with drunken driving.

Some, like me, were hospitalised for the first time, while others were on their third or fourth visit to this institution, but one thing we had in common was our mental state. Everyone was kept sedated, and Dr Viljoen treated everyone.

On my third day at this institution and my third visit to Dr Viljoen, he politely asked me to take a seat again. I stared at him blankly while he explained that he had seen little, if any, improvement in my condition. He had increased my dosage and still had not seen any improvement. He told me that the following day at 09:00, the ward sister would bring me to the theatre.

Unfortunately, medication had not improved my condition, and he believed that shock therapy would be an advisable alternative. He told me not to be nervous as the procedure was painless and that he would not exceed the prescribed maximum of five treatments. I did not care what he did to me. I was sure that the doctor knew what he was doing and that this therapy would be in my best interest.

The following morning at 09:00, the ward sister asked me to lie on a steel trolley, and she covered me with a light blanket. I felt myself being pushed down a corridor as I looked up at the bright fluorescent lights above flickering by. The sister pushed me through a double door, where I found Dr Viljoen examining his paperwork. He looked up as we entered and greeted us in his usual friendly manner. The ward sister pushed me under bright lights and excused herself. Dr Viljoen explained that the procedure is completely painless, but I might wake up with a headache. He had prescribed a painkiller, which would be administered after the procedure. Dr Viljoen was dressed in the usual theatre gear, with a green mask, green head covering and gloves. He told me to relax and count to ten. He placed a mask over my mouth and nose, and within seconds, I was anesthetised.

I woke up in my room with the bright ceiling lights shining in my face. What he had predicted had come true. I had a headache from hell. I managed to get off the trolley while trying to keep my

balance and steadied myself on the adjacent wall. It took a while for the dizziness to disappear, but as soon as I felt I could walk on my own without falling, I made my way to the sister's station. When the sister noticed me staggering towards her, she jumped from her seat and grabbed me by the arm.

"Come sit here while I get you a painkiller." She sat me down in the lounge on a couch. I could barely keep my eyes open and realised I needed more sleep.

I tried to sit upright, but my body didn't want to cooperate. I wanted to fall over as my eyes weighed heavily on my semi-conscience state. The sister quickly returned to me with pills in one hand and a glass of water in the other. She propped me up and helped me to swallow the pills she had given me.

I could no longer fight this drowsiness and kept wanting to fall asleep on the couch. The sister noticed my condition and helped me to bed.

When I woke up again, I noticed that my curtains had been drawn, as it must be evening. I managed to get out of bed much more easily as I felt much better after the long sleep. I made my way to the sister's station in search of food. She handed me a plate of food neatly wrapped in cling wrap. After dinner, the sister called me to her station to remind me that I needed to take my evening medication.

The following day, Mrs Verster excitedly told us that we would be painting Plaster of Paris. She excitedly explained that today, we could use water paint, and I heard some guys cheer in joy and clap their hands excitedly.

Every day, I met with Dr Viljoen, who displayed little excitement about my progress and ordered more shock therapy. Days turned into weeks as guys were discharged and others admitted, but I stayed.

Instead of the shock therapy blocking out memories, it affected me in that I could not distinguish between reality and a dream. I remember when my son had a Dachshund, which he named Zena, after the superhero. I remember that Zena was with me at the clinic and that she had given birth to five puppies. I recall vividly how, when I drove out of the clinic, with Zena and her pups on the seat beside me, I found a clearing at the side of the road and stopped the car. I removed Zena and her pups and placed them in the long grass before speeding off. This, I know,

could not be true as the dog would never have been allowed in the clinic in the first place, but I still recall this incident as if it happened yesterday.

I was hospitalised for a total of three months. Fifteen times, Dr Viljoen performed shock therapy on me, and by that time, I was almost in a zombie state. Whether or not the treatment was beneficial, or not, I will probably never know, but I was discharged and given a follow-up date. I remained off work while I was undergoing treatment, and the boarding process was being completed. During this time, I remained on psychiatric medication, which kept me confused and in a deluded state.

I reluctantly drove to Pretoria for my follow-up appointment with Dr Viljoen. My only motivation was that he was treating me for severe PTSD, and hopefully, soon, I would be medically boarded with full benefits.

I arrived at the clinic and immediately felt a change in the mood. All staff were morbid and not their cheerful selves. The atmosphere was so heavy it was almost tangible. I walked through the large French doors and immediately noticed a change in furniture. The friendly receptionist had been replaced by a less friendly and much older woman.

I greeted her with a smile and told her that I had an appointment with Dr Viljoen. She glared at me for a moment before blurting out that Dr Viljoen was not there anymore. I understood from her broken English that he was not working there anymore, so I asked her where I could meet with him as he was treating me for PTSD and was in the process of having me medically boarded.

She looked at me again, this time quite irritated by my questions and answered abruptly; “He’s dead.” I felt a sudden shiver down my spine, and all the blood drained from my face.

“How, when?” was all I could manage to say in response.

“He was shot and killed in his office by a patient two weeks ago,” she said more politely and sympathetically.

The lady realised that I was genuinely concerned, so she continued to explain; “Since his death, there has been an ongoing investigation of fraud against the doctor and this facility. The medical aid suspects that Dr Viljoen was overtreating patients and overcharging the medical aid, thereby committing medical

aid fraud. The investigators from the Commercial Crimes Unit have taken possession of all patient files and his personal computer. Many police officers, in their opinion, were medically boarded without the proper requirements being met. Also, it is suspected that the doctor was charging excessive medical aid rates. All personnel who were boarded are now under investigation. My heart sank as I realised that my attempts to be medically boarded had now disappeared.

The sudden ring of my telephone startled me. I sat behind my desk and was deep in thought about the spate of armed and cash-in-transit robberies that occurred on farms and banks. I suspected the same gang was responsible for these robberies, and it frustrated me that we had not received any information about their identity or whereabouts. After about the third ring, I answered the phone.

My branch commander instructed me to come to her office. On entering her office, she looked up the information and ordered me to close the door behind me. “The Internal Security Branch has relayed certain information about the armed robberies. You need to report to the district commissioner's office immediately, where you will be briefed.”

I was rather excited about this revelation. The details about this information were kept from my commander, and the district commissioner wanted to brief me personally. I admit that I felt quite good about that.

On my arrival at the office of the district commissioner I was shown to a large round table. The deputy district commissioner, the commissioner and the Commander of the Internal Security branch were already seated around the table.

“Come, sit,” ordered the commissioner with a gesture. “We have received reliable information that five black males from Pietermaritzburg will be committing an armed robbery at the First National Bank in Donnybrook on Friday the 1st,” the commander of the Internal Security Branch said, as he started the briefing. “I would like you to head a task force and investigate this information immediately. Understood?” asked the commissioner while looking me square in the eyes.

“Yes, Sir. I will get onto it right away.”

Realising that the briefing was over, I excused myself and left the office. I had been thrown in the deep end and was not sure what to do with this information, but whatever I did, I had to make it count as the commissioner depended on my expertise. I got into my car and sat behind the steering wheel. My mind was racing as it searched for answers. What was I supposed to do? This information was so sketchy. I was not told who these perpetrators were or exactly where they were from. Did the commissioner intend for me to arrest them? And if so, where on earth would I start looking for them? What would I arrest them for? Or maybe he expected that I would eliminate them during the bank robbery? He did not say so, but with my track record, maybe that's what he expected from me. I had no idea how heavily armed these guys would be, but I couldn't take any chances. If these are the same guys who were responsible for the spate of robberies, they were well-armed and well-trained.

As I drove to the Internal Stability Unit, I wondered how authentic this information was. The commander of the internal security branch seemed confident that the information was reliable. I walked into the office of the task force and briefed the Captain in charge. I told him that I needed five members, including a sniper. Opposite the bank was a shell garage. I needed his sniper on the roof, and the other four members would hide between cars in the car park outside the bank. I expected them to effect the arrest after the robbery. I would be inside the bank as a staff member. While I was debriefing the Captain, he recorded what I said, and at intervals, he asked questions just to clarify what I had said.

I arrived at my office to a cold reception. My commander didn't ask for a briefing, which I found rather strange, but dismissed it, thinking she was probably jealous. I telephoned the bank and spoke to Mr Impson, the bank manager. Without discussing details, I told him that I would need an office as I needed to be inside the bank during this robbery. He studdered as he spoke but agreed to my request.

On Friday morning before daybreak, members of the task force met me in Donnybrook. The town consists of a hotel, a garage, a few general dealers and a bank all of which were situated along the main road. This main road was the only road with any significance. Other gravel roads formed part of the

residential area. One could enter the town at one end of the main road and exit on the other end.

I placed three black members in an unmarked minibus at one end and two members in another unmarked vehicle at the other end. Just after seven that morning, Mr Impson arrived at the bank as arranged. He unlocked the heavy door at the rear of the bank and hurried inside to disarm the alarm. When it was safe to do so, I entered the bank. Beads of sweat formed on my brow, and I loosened the stranglehold of my tie.

Mr Impson directed me to an office near the front door, where I sat behind the desk with the top drawer slightly open, revealing the grip of my nine-millimetre pistol. Now, all we could do was wait. I declined a cup of coffee as I was already getting too hot, and I associate coffee with cigarettes, and now was not the time to smoke. Mr Impson unlocked the large wooden doors and pushed them apart.

A small group of black women had gathered in front of the bank. It was pension day, and they appeared eager to get their hands on some much-needed cash. I noticed bank staff were chatting amongst each other as they wondered who I was. Mr Impson reassured them that I was from the head office and that I needed to conduct an audit. The much-relieved staff then went about their duties, totally unaware of what we suspected would happen.

An hour passed, and there was no sign of the robbers. Time moved slowly, but I knew I had to stay alert. The robbery could take place at any time. After what felt like an hour, I glanced at my watch again, disappointed that only ten minutes had passed since I last glanced at the time. After three painful hours, it was lunch, and some staff left the bank for the local takeaway. I started questioning the information and wondered if we were there on the wrong day. As much as I wanted to sneak out of the back door for a smoke, I knew the robbery could take place at any time, and I needed to be prepared.

Finally, it was three thirty, and Mr. Impson made his way to the front and closed the heavy doors, which he locked. He glanced at me and sighed a sigh of relief as he loosened his tie. I was also relieved the day was over but disappointed that we didn’t nail these armed robbers.

A few months passed, and I was at the district offices. While walking down the corridor to the finance department, Captain Marais came walking towards me. I greeted him, and he briefly stopped to talk to me. All he said was; "Come see me when you're done."

He looked up and down the corridor as he spoke. I was under the impression that he didn't want to be seen talking to me. I nodded, and he quickly continued down the corridor. Once I had signed forms for informer rewards, I was eager to get to Captain Marais.

I arrived at his office and found his door was slightly ajar. I knocked twice, and he looked up at me. Without a word, he gestured for me to come in and close the door behind me. I was rather puzzled but complied. "Come, sit," he said to break the silence. "I was at a meeting yesterday when I overheard your unit commander and the district commissioner. She said you are fortunate that things didn't go their way. The so-called robbery at Donnybrook was a set-up. No details were discussed, so I can't tell you more than that, but all I can say is watch your back. That bitch is after your blood. I thanked him and realised that he did not want to spend time with me behind closed doors. He was close to pension and didn't want to jeopardise his future for a fight that wasn't his.

Within days of my being acquitted in court, I was summoned to the legal department at our provincial head office. I had made so many sacrifices, including not spending time with my young family, which ultimately left my marriage in ruins. I also had not taken annual leave for years. Based on my dedication, my unusually high success rate, and my exceptional conviction rate, they might excuse my recent behaviour and let me off with a warning. When I was served with a notice of disciplinary action, I realised what I suspected would come true. It was clear from the charges against me that they had their knives out for me, and I needed more than a miracle to save my career.

I drove back home, consumed in my own thoughts. I had been up to so much mischief and caused so much trouble. I wouldn't be suspended; I would get fired, and there was no way I could defend myself. There were also no grounds for justification, and I couldn't plead for leniency. What I had done was wrong, and I was fortunate not to have been convicted in a

criminal court. Had that been the case, I would have spent the rest of my life behind bars. I tried to lift my spirits by believing that I should resign with immediate effect and that this was the right choice. I had come to the end of the road, and the time had come to move on. If I miraculously won the disciplinary hearing or was released on a warning, I could be killed in the line of duty or, like many colleagues before me, wind up committing suicide.

My luck had to run out at some point. It frustrated me to think of all the times my commanders looked the other way when high profile suspects ended up dead. They took the credit for all the hours we spent tracing the suspect and accumulating enough evidence to secure a conviction, but now they will again take the credit, but this time for arresting one of their own who had turned bad. I decided to tender my resignation with immediate effect. This would be better than being dishonourably discharged.

I had a lot of time on my hands and often found myself sitting on the rocks on the beach where my father's ashes were scattered. The cool sea breeze was against my face as I stared at the horizon and white horses as they danced on the blue water. Often, I would wipe the tears from my cheeks. I would lie to myself that the tears were from the salty air in my eyes. I thought of my career, which had been my life, and how abruptly and unpleasantly it ended. I tried to cheer myself up by thinking of my achievements over the years.

I became a detective before completing the mandatory four years in the uniform branch and became a specialist detective before completing the mandatory time in the detective branch. I became a detective branch commander at the age of twenty-one years, which was unheard of. Looking back on my career, I quite possibly had too much responsibility at a tender age and probably witnessed too much death and devastation. I tried to deal with the physiological effects of this in my own way instead of receiving counselling. The psychological effects were only felt years later. Every time I attended a murder scene, something inside of me would die. I became hard and emotionless. Even after the passing of my father, I did not shed a tear even though I grew to love him as he grew older. I was nominated to attend an introductory detective course in Durban. I attended a six-week detective course in Paarl, Cape Town. I was

fortunate to be selected to attend a three-week advanced investigation course conducted by members of the FBI and specialists in forensic and pathologic investigation, together with criminal profiles. I investigated serial killers and cracked the biggest mystery involving child abduction and trafficking. I received the first conviction where teeth impressions were deemed as unique as a fingerprint. The case where a deceased's Will and Testament were nullified if the beneficiary was convicted for the murder of that person. Two books had been written and published on two cases I investigated. Two cases I successfully investigated were screened in a documentary on South African crime. I investigated terrorism and received convictions whilst I was a non-commissioned officer. I investigated and received the first life sentence conviction in KZN for rape. I thought even further back to my time in the Naval Cadets and that I was, as far as I knew, the only cadet in that intake to attend three-week training at the naval base in Saldanha.

I would sit on the rocks for hours, engulfed in my own thoughts and reminiscing about years gone by. Often, I found myself on the beach until it got dark.

I thought of the time I underwent shock therapy and the long-term effects this procedure had on me. Memories were not erased, as was intended, but instead it enhanced my memory. Suddenly, when I came to the realisation that my childhood memories were as clear as daylight, I wondered how far back I could remember.

My first thought was of my time in pre-primary school. I remembered the preschool I attended, which was an old, brightly coloured house. The school was situated next to the main road, and an oak tree stood on the front wire fence. This tree was possibly older than the house and stood so tall that I could not see the top of it. Branches stretched over the fence and dropped acorns on the sidewalk. I recalled wearing a green jersey with a yellow stripe across the chest that my mother had knitted me, and I pedalled my tricycle on the sidewalk, laughing uncontrollably as I rode under the tree. The joints between the concrete squares tickled my bum as I pedalled along the sidewalk.

I wondered briefly why that was my first memory of my childhood but convinced myself that I could cast my memory further back. Within a few moments, I recalled the time when I was born. I tried to dismiss this thought as I was a prem baby, born at twenty-six weeks. The chances of survival at that age, in the sixties, were virtually nil, never mind remembering anything at that time. I again dismissed the idea of being able to recall anything, but I clearly remember that my steel cot was to the right of my mother's bed. The sister who took care of my mother was slightly plump with dark hair cut into a bob-style.

My grandparents came to visit my mother. My grandmother wore a scotch pattern dress, which was dark brown and black. I recalled her holding me in her arms for a while. I again dismissed these thoughts as an impossibility. It worried me for a long time as I wasn't sure if I had dreamed it during one of my shock therapy sessions or if it was really true. When I asked my mother about what I could remember, she was horrified. She could not remember what the ward sister looked like but remembered my grandmother's tartan dress. According to my mother, this dress was worn only on special occasions. Her response resulted in more questions than answers.

I tried humouring myself by thinking of some of the mischievous shenanigans I got up to over the years. I recalled rushing somewhere in my state vehicle when suddenly a traffic cop jumped out of the bush where he was hiding behind a speed camera and waved me down. Instantly irritated, I reluctantly stopped on the side of the road. An overweight traffic cop walked slowly to the left of my vehicle and checked the licence disk. He then strolled slowly around my vehicle, checking the condition of the tyres. When he finally arrived at my side window, I was visibly fuming that he was wasting my time. Just to infuriate me even more, he asked me to get out of my vehicle. Fortunately, I was sober at the time. He wrote me a ticket for speeding and handed me a copy. I insisted that he was wasting my time and that I was in a hurry, but this cop would not entertain my excuses. I took the ticket and tore it up into one hundred small pieces before spinning my tyres as I pulled off, leaving him in a cloud of dust.

A few days later, I recalled, I was again summoned to the office of my district commander. I wondered what I had done this time and wondered if his goldfish was still alive. Whenever I was

summoned to his office, I peed in a fish bowl where one lonely fish lived. I arrived at his office, and he asked me to be seated as he needed to fetch my file. The /5 sub file contained all written warnings, departmental actions, demotions, withheld promotions, and so on. My /5 sub file was thicker than my entire file. I smirked when I saw the fish was still alive, but was swimming or splashing on its side, struggling for oxygen.

Moments later, he returned with the fine. The traffic cop picked up every small piece of the fine, stuck it together, and made a photocopy. ”Take this fine to Major Naidoo at the traffic department, and apologise for your bad behaviour.” I took the copy and walked out of his office. When I arrived at a waste paper bin in the corridor, I crumpled up the fine and tossed it in.

There is always one person who brings nothing to a braai and then eats and drinks the most. I knew that our district commander would attend an office function, which we decided to hold at a resort, about one hundred kilometres from our office. We had already squashed the brandy bottle cap and lit the fire, when our district commander arrived. As usual, he came empty-handed. Someone poured him a stiff brandy, which he gladly accepted. I waited until he finished his second drink before announcing we had bought him an inch-thick rump steak. He had a smirk of entitlement written across his face. When I placed his steak on the hot coals, I spiced it and added Jamal through the spice mix. I flipped the steak and repeated the spicing process.

Within two minutes, I removed his medium-rare steak from the hot coals and handed it to him on a paper plate, which he accepted and just nodded in appreciation. By that time, he had consumed about ten drinks. After eating his steak, he decided to leave in silence. He wanted to get back before it got dark. He stood up and realised he had too much to drink and that it would be advisable not to drive. Much to my dismay, he nominated me as his driver, but when I thought of the trip ahead, I smiled to myself. This would be worth every moment, I thought sadistically.

We had been travelling for about twenty minutes when he told me to find a suitable place to stop. The car had hardly come to a full stop before he flung the door open and ran behind a big shrub. I smiled to myself when I noticed he returned without a sock. About thirty minutes later, I noticed that he was starting to

feel very uncomfortable again. Again, he asked me to stop, which I did. When he climbed back into the car, I noticed that he wore no socks. I remained silent, and drove. I just smiled to myself as I knew what he had done with his socks. All he said during the remainder of the trip was; “Drive faster!”

I thought of my time in the Unrest and Violent Crime Investigation Unit. My district commander and I needed to submit a report to the National Commissioner, George Vivaz, with an update on political violence in our district. This meant that once a month, we would travel to the police head office in Pretoria, where we would spend the night and head back the following day after our meeting.

This time he decided that we would not stay in a hotel, but rather with his brother, whom he had not seen in many years. His brother lived in a moderate two-bedroom home. He invited us to spend the night, but we would need to share a double bunk bed in the boy’s bedroom. The brother said that his two young sons could sleep in the lounge for a night. My commissioner was much older than me so he suggested I sleep on the top bunk. It was after midnight, and I still hadn’t fallen asleep. My Colonel snored non-stop. I tried counting each time he snored, like counting imaginary sheep and hoped that I would fall asleep before I counted to one hundred. This, unfortunately, was not the case. Out of frustration, I took hold of my pillow and hit him as hard as I could on the head. He woke up bewildered at what had happened but was not sure what. I used this brief time of silence to force myself to fall asleep.

I thought of my achievements. I completed basic military training at the age of twelve. I founded a gang that existed years after leaving school. I completed the Duzi Canoe Marathon. Years before completing the mandatory four years in the uniform branch, I was promoted to the detective branch and became a detective branch commander at twenty-one. Before the mandatory time in a detective branch, I was promoted to a specialised unit. I was the youngest serving member of the Murder and Robbery Unit. I investigated a murder where teeth impressions were deemed unique and resulted in a conviction. This was a landmark case, as never before were teeth impressions used not only to identify the perpetrator but were also deemed unique to an individual.

The murder of Dr Nel was screened on a SABC 2 production called “Solving it.”

Dr Nel had lived a humble life in a small Midlands town. He devoted his time to treating the poor and the elderly. He would charge a minimal rate, or nothing at all, for his services. Everyone loved Dr Nel. He was the only doctor in the district who did house calls. Dr Nel was a widower. His wife passed away years earlier from cancer, and his two daughters immigrated to the UK, where they married and started their own families. Dr Nel substituted his loneliness by staying busy, often seeing patients in his rural clinic until late at night. Some, who were more privileged, felt that Dr Nel was a vet. He was good at dealing with everyday illnesses but would sometimes misdiagnose more intricate ailments.

Every Friday, Dr Nel made his way to Boston with his 1974 Peugeot 404. He loved that car as he could use it as a station wagon when critically ill patients needed intensive care at the local hospital. Dr Johannes Nel was excited to travel to Boston as he had built good relations with many of the locals. Also, some patients would come from far away to see Dr Nel, often waiting at five in the morning for him to arrive at the clinic. Dr Nel had a reputation of being very punctual. After his breakfast, which consisted of a bowl of oats, one hardboiled egg, one slice of toast, and a banana, he would leave his modest home at exactly eight-thirty and arrive at the clinic at nine. Usually he expected at least forty patients outside his clinic. His clientele consisted mainly of old women who would huddle together to brave the cold. Normally he had attended to all his patients by five that afternoon. The clinic, which was once a farmhouse, was situated about a kilometre from the main road. The road, if I could call it that, was once a cattle path, with a meter-high yellow grass flanking the pathway. Dr Nel realised that pensioners would be receiving their state grants, and many would pay him for his services.

At about four-thirty, Dr Nel saw his last patient. He packed his forty-five-year-old medicine bag and locked the clinic. As he drove along the path towards the main road, he suddenly noticed four youths stand up in the long grass they were hiding in. One had a homemade firearm, which he pointed at Dr Nel, forcing him

to stop. The other youths were armed with bush knives and sticks. Dr Nel recognised the boy with the firearm, as he had been at the clinic with his mother earlier that day. Dr Nel recalled treating the boy and his mother for flu. Dr Nel called out to the boy, calling him by name. Realising that Dr Nel recognised him, he fired a single shot which penetrated the doctor's heart. Dr Nel slumped forward with his head on the steering wheel. Now that there could be no identification, the youths searched his jacket pockets for money. The four young men were disappointed that they had only recovered three hundred rand. Three boys started to question the gunman, saying that he lied when saying that the deceased had received a lot of money that day. They went through his car in search of any valuables but found nothing they could sell. One of the guys ran back to where they were hiding and came back to the car with a two-litre bottle of petrol. He hurried to open the bottle and splashed its contents inside the car and over the body. When he was satisfied that the bottle was empty, he struck a match and tossed it into the vehicle, causing an instant flame. The boys left the burning car behind them and ran to the main road, where they caught a taxi.

I completed training in bush war and crowd control. At twenty-six, I completed a Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) course. I also completed an introductory detective course and the detective course. I was one of fifteen detectives to be trained by members of the FBI in America. I investigated two serial killers and politically motivated murders. At a young age, I was responsible for reporting directly to the National Commissioner of Police. I investigated terrorism as a non-commissioned officer, which was contradictory to the laws involving the investigation of such matters. I managed task teams consisting of twenty-five detectives. I introduced the "first seventy-two hours." My team and I would investigate a murder. We found that the first seventy-two hours were essential when investigating a murder. If no results or information had been achieved after the first seventy-two hours, the matter on hand would have become more difficult to solve. We would attend the crime scene and "work" nonstop for seventy-two hours. Other specialised detectives later adopted this method as it proved imperative in the investigation of any crime.

I received the highest conviction for rape when a casual gardener raped a seventy-year-old after a dispute erupted over his wage.

Three books were written about cases in which I was an investigating officer. The authors were Mary de Haas, entitled **Unequal Protection**; Jonny Steinberg, with his book **The Midlands;** and Chris Karsen, with his book **True Crime**.

While engulfed in my thoughts on years gone by, I reminisced about the wasted years when my promotion was withheld.

As a constable in the uniform branch, I recalled that my office was adjacent to the charge office. On a day like any other, I heard a commotion in the charge office and recognised one voice as being that of a white woman. I stormed into the charge office to satisfy my curiosity. I found a black male and a white female on the other side of the counter. The lady accused the taxi driver of forcing her off the road, causing damage to the undercarriage as she swerved to avoid a collision. The heated argument ended with him with his face only inches from hers, as he continued shouting at her. The lady stood her ground, knowing that she was safe in the charge office with three uniformed policemen nearby. When she tried to retaliate, the taxi driver shouted even louder, leaving the lady on the verge of tears.

I was immediately enraged when I noticed the charge office personnel stand back as they watched the taxi driver humiliate the lady. I hurried to the counter, leaned over and slapped the taxi driver once across the face. I pointed at him and told him to have a little respect and stop shouting. A visibly upset lady left the charge office in tears. Later, I heard that the taxi driver opened a case of assault against me. I was even more horrified when I came to learn that the charge office personnel submitted statements against me, leaving me with no chance of defending myself in court.

The public prosecutor advised that I pay a fifty rand fine before the matter was set down for trial. If I did, he could close this matter without me being convicted in court and having a criminal record. I paid the fine, and as a result, my promotion from Constable to Lance Sergeant was withheld for one year. Once the year was over, I had already completed my studies as a

sergeant and was promoted accordingly, missing the rank of Lance Sergeant.

Memories of my ordeals came flooding back. I thought of the unfairness of my promotion from Sergeant to Warrant officer being also withheld for a year. The sacrifices I made went unnoticed. I realised that often, one cannot outrun the ghosts that haunt you.

I remember when I was told to go to a small Midlands town and sign for an armed cash-in-transit heist on an SPV security vehicle. I arrived at the charge office to take receipt of the cash in transit docket. While inside the charge office, I heard a commotion from the station commander's office, which was adjacent to the charge office. I stood listening for a while if the commotion intensified. Shortly thereafter, I heard objects clattering as they fell on the floor. Thinking that I should intervene, I left the charge office and rushed to the station commander's office.

I opened the door only to find the station commander, who was a pot-bellied forty-year-old, sitting on the chest of a young Constable. The station commander repeatedly punched the constable in the face, with a clenched left and right fist. The young Constable tried to ward off the blows by covering his face, but the much older and heavier man didn't hold up. He kept driving punches into the face of the Constable, who stood no chance.

I rushed towards the duo and pushed the station commander off the young man, who, by that time, sustained a bloody nose and swollen eyes. I helped the young, crying Constable to his feet. I asked the station commander what was going on, and he told me that the constable had stolen a fuse out from one of the vans. The Constable denied that he took the fuse and said that he had no use for a fuse as he didn't own a vehicle of his own. To defuse the situation, I decided to take the constable to the district commissioner's office to enable him to lay a complaint against his station commander. Whilst we undertook the two-hour drive, Constable Roberto told me that he had completed his training at police college only two months ago and that this was his first station.

We arrived at the district commissioner's office and were directed to the office of Captain Marais. We sat in Captain

Marais's office while Constable Roberto explained what had happened. Captain Marais took detailed notes and asked relevant questions until he was satisfied that he fully understood the circumstances. Captain Marais excused himself and left us in his office. About thirty minutes later, Captain Marais returned to his office. He sat behind his desk before speaking. “I have taken this matter under advisement. We have decided that transferring Constable Roberto would be in everyone’s interest. Constable, where would you like to be stationed?” Captain Marais asked.

Constable Roberto thought for a moment before answering. “Vehicle Theft Unit,” he replied, realising that he would be promoted to a specialised unit without serving any more time in uniform.

Captain Marais made notes and replied, ”You can start at the Vehicle Theft Unit in Pietermaritzburg on Monday. Take the next few days off to get yourself to Pietermaritzburg.” Tears turned into joy as the constable smiled and nodded his head in agreement. It was a cheerful drive back to the station. Constable Roberto was grateful that I was there at the right time, and willing to assist him.

Upon arriving at the unit, my commander called me to his office and told me to close the door behind me. I sat opposite him as he explained that the district commissioner's office had sent him a fax notifying me of their intentions to conduct disciplinary action against me. The charge was; “Acting in a manner unbecoming of a police officer.”

“What a load of bullshit!” I remember thinking. Nevertheless my promotion was withheld for a year again.

I thought of when I drove to East London. I travelled on the N2 through the Transkei. As usual, I drove with a quart of beer between my legs and a case of beer on the back seat when I came across a roadblock about five kilometres outside Umtata. I made sure to keep my sunglasses on as I was convinced that my eyes were bloodshot. I took a deep breath as an overweight female traffic officer walked towards me. My mind raced as I thought of a way to convince the traffic officer not to lock me up.

I leaned over to the “cubby hole,” where the police radio was hidden. I took hold of the microphone and pretended to have a conversation. When this traffic officer approached me, I said

quite loudly, "I received that, Sir. I'm at a roadblock just outside Umtata, and these bloody cops are holding me up. … Yes, Sir I'll tell them … Okay, I received that … Yes, Sir."

The traffic officer wanted to say something, but I interrupted her by flipping the siren switch next to the radio. "Sorry, I wish I could stay and chat, but I'm on official police business," I told a visibly upset traffic cop. I put the car in gear and sped off in a cloud of dust, leaving the traffic cop with her hands on her hips.

I was mistaken to think that was the end of it. The following week, I was summoned to my commander's office again. I noticed that he tried to sound serious as he spoke but laughed under his breath. A crooked smile appeared, which he tried to disguise.

"The district commissioner wants you to appear before a disciplinary commission. The charge against you is a contravention of the road ordinance. Apparently, a traffic officer from Umtata has also been summoned to testify against you," he explained.

"Come on, Sir. You know this is a lot of bullshit," I pleaded.

"Yes, I know it is. I am recommended to warn you myself, but as you know, this warning will count against you on your next application for promotion. Off the record, I think it would be wise to take it on the chin from me and not during a departmental hearing. There is no telling what the outcome of that hearing will be."

Needless to say, my promotion was again withheld for a year.

The toxic concoction of alcohol and adrenalin led me down a slippery slope and into the pits of hell. Eventually, not even alcohol could lift me out of my darkest days of depression. Having investigated murder cases in the early nineties, at the height of political killings between IFP and ANC, and at a young age had moulded my character. I had become emotionless and hard. I thought again of when my father passed away. I showed no signs of remorse and didn't shed a tear.

I sat at home for a few weeks, wondering what I would do with my life. I was only experienced in policing, and I thought of the time I was a respected, well-trained and experienced Violent

Crime Detective in the Murder and Robbery Unit. The thought of becoming a security guard, made me feel sick in my stomach. I was in the grips of a deep, dark and lonely place called depression and was on a rapid downward spiral into the pits of hell and had no idea how to help myself out of it.

I was haunted by memories of horrific crime scenes or the screaming and wailing of family members etched in my memory. I frequently experienced flashbacks, which would cause me to become anxious and depressed. My heart would race, and I would break out in night sweats.

Sometimes the smallest incident would trigger a memory. The corrosive occupation, over too many years, and many horrific scenes were engraved in my memory and would haunt me forever. It moulded me in many ways and influenced my character. I was known as a gentle giant at primary school, but now I had become hard, emotionless, and aggressive.

I thought of Mr Graham Teaman. I wondered why he was still farming as he was in his late seventies. Mr Teaman was a cabbage farmer and lived no more than ten kilometres from the general dealer of the late Mr Bezuidenhout. He was no stranger to crime, and not a week had passed since Mr Teaman had filed a complaint of theft or vandalism on his farm. Most thefts were petty but sometimes were more serious, even involving violent crime.

Not only did Mr Teaman continuously battle theft, but small wild duiker would wander onto his land and feast on sweet, green cabbage shoots. Mr Teaman invited the young and enthusiastic policeman to hunt these duiker pests. He suggested that we should drive on the land at night, leaving a black constable on the back of our open van with a flashlight. Mr, Teaman suggested that he lend me his .303 rifle to shoot the duiker, as he believed this firearm was more suited for hunting than our police issue firearm.

I gladly accepted the invitation as I had never hunted before and was quite excited by the experience. Late one night, I patrolled the farm with the vehicle lights off. A young black constable armed with a flashlight was placed on the back of my vehicle.

Whilst scanning the planted fields, the constable tapped the vehicle roof as a signal for me to stop as he had spotted a

buck. I climbed on the back of the vehicle and squinted into the light of the torch. About one hundred meters from us, I noticed a small duiker lavishly eating the cabbage shoots. I raised the hunting rifle lent to me by Mr Teaman and took aim. I thought of the training I had received, held my breath and gently squeezed the trigger. The shot echoed into the clear night. I looked up and adjusted my eyes to the light and noticed two shining eyes staring back at me; I was in total disbelief that I had missed the buck.

Again, I took aim, deciding to take my time rather than rush the shot, and only when the two sparkling eyes perfectly fit between my sights did I hold my breath and squeeze the trigger. The rifle recoiled against my shoulder as the projectile was ejected in a puff of smoke. Again, I looked into the eyes of the duiker, who stared at me bewilderedly. I fired five rounds at the duiker, but it continued to stare back at me. The constable just shook his head and knew better than to make a remark. I instructed him to run onto the land and report his findings to me. I pointed the flashlight at the duiker as the two eyes stared back at me.

Minutes later, I heard the constable call me, and he beckoned me by frantically waving his arms. Clearly, something was wrong. I ran to where the duiker stood. I noticed that the duiker was breathing heavily as it was fighting for its life. The young buck was shot three times. Once through the neck, once through the ear and once through its mane. Its sheer will and determination to live kept it alive. Terrified eyes looked at me as I examined its injuries. I was saddened to think that this young animal was suffering—warm air from its flaring nostrils against my skin. The sight of this young animal and the realisation of what I had done brought tears to my eyes. I handed the constable a knife and walked back to the vehicle.

I compared this incident to the killing of a criminal and thought there was no comparison. Never again would I kill an animal. The smudged tears down the cheeks below the beautiful, but terrified brown eyes will haunt me until the end of my days. But criminals, rapists and murderers got what they deserved, final justice.

Strict and disciplined military experience from a young age moulded my ways, which I often enforced on my young son. I lived with regrets but knew there was no way to change the past.

I could only change my future. I was lost, and I had lost everything, but unlike many of my colleagues, I was still alive. Some were killed in the line of duty, and others committed suicide. Most dedicated detectives were divorced, and many resigned only to spend their days in local pubs. Alcohol did help, even if it was temporary.

A friend whom I supported and often visited owned a bottle store not far from where I lived. He sympathised with me and gave me unlimited credit, with the understanding that I would pay him when I could. I often found myself in front of the bottle store early in the morning, waiting for him to open at eight.

I sat on the rocks overlooking the ocean. Instead of dwelling on my current situation, I thought of lifting my spirits by reminiscing about the good and funny moments I had during my career. I briefly wondered why my first thought was the time I went to East London with my informant, “Bobby”.

Bobby told me, during the years when I investigated the AWB, that once a month, all the AWB members and supporters in the Transkei region would meet at the home of one of the members in East London. Members came from outlying areas as far away as Elliot, Uggie and McClair. The reason for the meeting was for senior members to relay information from the top involving planned terror attacks against blacks and any other planned activities or protests against the ANC government. But the real reason was just a piss-up, where the woman often outdrank the men.

Bobby and I left Durban with a case of beer on the back seat of my Toyota Cressida. At that time, I was seconded to the Internal Security branch only because I did not have the required rank to investigate cases of this nature. As I drove through the Kei River pass, I often misjudged the curves in the road, resulting in the car leaving the road and travelling on gravel before gently guiding the car back on the road. The Kei River was far below the road pass, and I wondered how many people had plunged to their deaths in that pass. Bobby would laugh out loud almost hysterically every time the car left the road. We were adamant about finishing the case of beer before we reached East London.

We were about to reach East London when, again, I misjudged a curve to the right in the road, and again, the car ended up on the gravel. Only this time, I did not react quickly

enough, and the car ended up going down an embankment backwards. Bobby again shrieked out in nervous laughter, but I did not join his sentiment. After tossing the empty beer bottles in the bush, I called the police breakdown, who towed us to the local police garage. I breathed a sigh of relief when the mechanics told me the damage was on the undercarriage and body. They were able to repair the diff so that I could get back to Durban.

I arrived home late that evening and was relieved that most of the damage was to the body and undercarriage of the car. I was awake before sunrise the following day, which was a Friday. At exactly seven, I called my friend, Cowboy, who was a panel beater. I knew Cowboy would be awake by that time as he would have had two cups of coffee with brandy by that time. Cowboy was always willing to help with any mechanical or body issue to any vehicle. He was quite satisfied with a bottle of brandy for his efforts. Within thirty minutes, I drove onto the plot where Cowboy lived and worked. Cowboy served in the military in the infantry, and that was his life for thirty years. He had never married, and he preferred it that way. Wherever Cowboy went, his dog, Sparkie, would follow. He loved his dog and often boasted that he even shared his bed with this dog. I told Cowboy about the urgency of repairing the car as I needed to report back at my unit on Monday. I gave him a bottle of brandy as payment and left. Cowboy made it very clear that he worked better whilst sipping on a brandy.

On Sunday afternoon Cowboy called. I could come and fetch the car. I first thought that Cowboy did an excellent job of the beating the panel. There were no signs that the car was damaged. With a smile, Cowboy handed me the car keys.

I was seconded to the Internal Security branch for only a few months before retaining my position at my unit. The commander of the Internal Security branch phoned me and asked about the damage to the petrol tank. I lied by telling him it was in that condition when the car was allocated to me. I knew that he could not deny that as we did not inspect the car together during the handing over. I smiled as I recalled how I dodged that bullet.

The cool sea breeze against my face brought tears to my eyes as the salty air burned my eyes. I continued to gaze at the white

horses as they bobbed up and down on the waves. While reminiscing about days gone by, for no particular reason, the name of Jan Van Tonder came to mind.

I met Constable Van Tonder at a crime scene where all the women in the family were hacked to death. The grandmother was possibly in her eighties, her daughter probably in her late fifties and three granddaughters aged between three and twelve years of age were hacked to death in their two-roomed mud house.

On my arrival at the crime scene, I was rather impressed by how this young constable had taken charge of the crime scene prior to our arrival. Constable Van Tonder introduced himself to me and gave me a brief “run down” of the crime scene. Through bloodshot eyes from not sleeping for the past seventy-two hours, I was quite impressed at how serious he was about his job. His uniform was immaculate, and he was dressed to the T, with a leg holster neatly hanging from his left leg. His handcuffs were neatly stored in a pouch which was clipped to his belt. I never saw Constable Van Tonder again after that.

Some weeks later, I heard that Constable Van Tonder was working the night shift when he popped in at a garage for a cup of coffee. The garage owner gave away coffee to members working the night shift. Whilst he was ordering a cup of coffee, a taxi stopped to refuel. There were about ten passengers in the taxi, and they were obviously drunk. Music from the taxi blared into the quiet evening, and the occupants were equally rowdy.

When Constable Van Tonder finally received his coffee, he walked past the taxi and towards his patrol vehicle. He stopped briefly at the driver's door and instructed him to control his passengers and get them to pipe down. He heard as the black girls laughed at him and dismissed his request with vulgar language. Not wanting to provoke the situation, Constable Van Tonder turned from the taxi and walked to his vehicle with his coffee in hand.

About an hour later, Constable Van Tonder was summoned back to the charge office. His Captain, and relief commander called him to his office. “Where were you at about one thirty?” his commander asked sternly.

Constable Van Tonder thought for a while before answering; “I was patrolling the Oslo Beach area. Why?” he asked inquisitively.

“A Ms Rosy Dlamini reported that you pulled her out of the taxi she was in and dragged her into the Admiralty Reserve, where you raped her. This allegation was confirmed by the taxi driver, the conductor and two other passengers.

I heard that Constable Van Tonder had been suspended without benefits. Swabs were obtained from the victim, but he knew it would take months before the results vindicated him. His young wife of only a year and a half filed for divorce, forcing him to sell his house and its contents, which he shared with her. Departmental steps were instituted against him, but he resigned with immediate effect.

I realised that I needed to generate an income, as I spent most of my money on beer and bad women and just wasted the rest. I was not qualified to do anything except investigation, so I started a private investigation service, which I called PITT (Private Investigation, Tracing and Tactics) and placed an ad in our local newspaper.

I met my first client that afternoon. She told me that she was seventy-five years old and was concerned that her husband, who was two years her senior, hadn’t touched her in months. I hid my smile behind a serious face as she continued with her story. She told me that he went to their local pub every day and sometimes came home after dark. She suspected that he would get drunk and pick up a black prostitute. They had been married for forty-five years, but she noticed a change in him over the past two years. She told me that she was now also too afraid to initiate sex, as he might have AIDS. I promised to look into it and get back to her.

That afternoon, I drove to a ski boat club, known as a hangout for prostitutes. As I stopped my car, a twenty-something-year-old prostitute came up to me. She posed for me, displaying her assets, thinking I was a potential client, but I quickly told her I wasn’t interested but asked her if she wanted to earn fifty rand. Business had been slow that day, so she agreed. I told her that an old man would be walking out of the pub in a little while. She had to offer herself to him and invite him

to a secluded area on the beach, where she was to have sex with him. I would hide in the nearby Admiralty Reserve and would photograph them in the act.

She agreed, and I drove her to a secluded area not far from the pub. She seemed quite excited about the easy way of making money, and I drove her to the pub, where I dropped her off on the corner. I drove to the parking area, where I sat in the car and waited.

About thirty minutes later, I recognised the old man as he came staggering out of the pub. He walked towards the corner of the building, which was in the direction of his house. As he reached the corner, the pretty prostitute walked up to him, and they started to chat. I noticed the old man nod his head, and I knew that he had accepted her proposal and took the bait. I watched as they held hands and walked towards the beach. I had to drive fast to get into position before they arrived. Everything worked like clockwork.

As she led him to the prearranged area, I hid myself in a nearby bush. She laid him on his back and stood over him, lifting her skirt and pulling her panties to the side, exposing her merchandise. He pulled his shorts down, and after noticing that he was aroused, she sat gently on top of him, directing his manhood inside her. I heard him moan with pleasure and she manoeuvred her body for maximum penetration.

With my camera pointed in their direction, I adjusted the focus and snapped a picture. He stopped briefly at the sound of my camera and looked frantically in all directions, but the pleasure was overwhelming. He was not going to be distracted by a strange noise, so he continued moaning with pleasure. He had placed his hands around her waist as she kept moving on top of him. With a look of complete ecstasy on his face, he turned his head to face me with his eyes tightly shut. This was the perfect shot I thought as I kept the camera still and took another shot.

The click of the camera startled the old man, and he said; “What’s that?” He sat in a half-upright position and looked frantically from side to side. She took his head in both hands and turned his face towards her, and said, “I luuv you, I luuv you, in her thick Zulu accent. He realised that something suspicious had happened, so he pushed her off and jumped to his feet, pulling his shorts up around his waist. He pushed her aside and hurried

towards the pub, not looking back once at the girl. When he was out of sight, I called the girl and congratulated her on a great performance. She smiled broadly as I paid her fifty rand.

A day or two later, I met with my client and handed her the photos I had taken. She was delighted that her suspicions had been confirmed and vowed that she would never touch him again. Vengeance was hers.

After only a few short months, I decided that I needed to make a fresh start. I packed two bags and made my way to Durban railway station. I needed to decide whether to catch a bus to Cape Town or whether I should go to Joburg. I decided that fate should have its way, so I flipped a coin. Heads meant Joburg, and tails meant Cape Town. The coin landed in my palm, and I flipped it onto the back of my other hand. Heads it was. I bought a bus ticket for Joburg and left Durban with two bags and three hundred rand in my pocket. This was the start of new beginnings.

I lived like a homeless person. I was a homeless person. I had arrived in a city I was not familiar with, with no prospects of work and no place to stay. I slept under bridges with other destitute people. I used the little money I had to catch taxis to the various casinos around Joburg. I had printed my CV and was even willing to be a security guard at one of the casinos. I even caught three taxis to get to Sun City in search of a job.

As the weeks went by, I was becoming increasingly desperate to find work, but I was either overqualified or not black enough. My only friend, Sipho and I shared the same shelter, which consisted of cardboard boxes and plastic. Sipho begged at a nearby intersection and often encouraged me to join him on the opposite corner, but I couldn't bring myself to beg. I was always independent and expected no handouts or sympathy from anyone.

I stayed with Sipho for about a week, when one day, he brought a pile of newspapers. We would use the newspapers to sleep on and to make a fire with. I casually browsed through the classifieds and saw an advert for any male person with a background in law enforcement. I excitedly hurried to the public phone and dialled the number on the ad. A friendly lady answered the phone and arranged an interview for the following day at 10.

I met with Sipho at our home. He had just started a fire. The sun was setting earlier now, and the Highveld evenings brought a chill to our bones. Sipho looked up at me as I hurried towards him. He obviously noticed a difference in my posture and knew that the phone call had produced positive results. I sat near the fire with Sipho, excitedly chatting about the job interview. I did not know where Ondekkers Road was, but Sipho quickly directed me from Bree Street taxi rank to Roodepoort.

"The taxi will travel along Ondekkers Road, and you just need to ask the taxi driver to stop at your destination," he explained excitedly that evening. I hardly slept a wink. I was so excited.

This was my chance, and I needed to make a good impression. Sipho gave me an old Bic razor, and he warmed water over the fire for me. This second-hand razor pulled more than it cut, but by the third shave, I managed to remove my beard. The following morning, I got up just as the city was coming to life, dressed in my best trousers and shirt, hoping that all the creases would be out by the time I had my appointment.

I arrived at the office park on Ondekkers at 9:30 and had just enough time to find out exactly where to go and find a public bathroom just to make sure I looked good enough to make an impression. I walked through the double glass door, and a well-groomed middle-aged lady looked up at me and smiled. She showed me to a seat and said that her boss wouldn't be long. I sat nervously on a colourful couch. My legs couldn't stop shaking, so I crossed them as I waited. After only a few minutes, the receptionist walked over to me and politely said; "This way, please, Sir." She opened the door for me, and I entered the office.

Behind the desk sat an overweight, red-faced, middle-aged man. He spoke with a distinctive Afrikaans accent. He pointed to a chair opposite him and glared at me over his gold-rimmed glasses. He asked me about my background, and without detailed questioning, he hired me. He told me to report for work on the following Monday. I was so excited I could hardly contain myself. I was about to leave his office when he spoke again; "Don't you want to know what we do here?"

I was suddenly brought back to reality. I stopped in my tracks and turned around to face him. He signalled to the chair as if a silent order for me to take a seat. "In short, I buy low-cost

repossessed homes directly from the bank and sell the houses at a profit. These houses are in townships around Joburg. Your job is to evict the occupants and ensure the new owners take occupation safely. All legalities have been taken care of, and the occupants have been notified to vacate the premises, as they no longer own the house, and the bank does. These repossessions are due to non-payment. The new owners have bonds to pay and need to occupy the house; you just need to get the current occupants out. On Monday, I will introduce you to the rest of the team." I thanked him again for the opportunity and left his office feeling quite uncomfortable about this offer, but I desperately needed the job.

Over the weekend, I paged through the Saturday newspaper and came across an ad for rooms to let. I contacted the owner and made arrangements to meet him. I was met at the gate by an elderly man. He rented rooms in his neglected house to augment his pension, but this beat sleeping on the streets. We agreed that I could pay my rent at the end of the month when I receive my salary. He welcomed me and showed me to a small bedroom with dilapidated furniture, stained and smelly carpets and curtains that hadn't been washed in years. This single bed was as old as he was, with springs protruding through the foam, but it was a bed, and I was grateful. This room would be my home for the next two years.

On Monday, I caught a taxi to work and made sure I arrived at least half an hour before anyone else did. I stood outside smoking and noticed different cars driving into the office park. The occupants stared at me, wondering who this stranger was and what I was doing, just loitering around. At 7:45, the receptionist arrived in her small but well-looked-after Fiat Uno. She smiled when she saw me and beckoned me to come inside. As I entered the lobby, I saw six guys standing together, chatting about the weekend's rugby. I nervously walked in and mumbled good morning. The six guys stopped chatting and looked at me briefly. I stood awkwardly to the side when suddenly I heard the boss arrive. He didn't seem to be in a good mood as he yelled at us to come to his office. He abruptly introduced me before examining a pile of documents on his desk. "Our conveyancing attorney has the deeds for three houses in Vosloorus, two in Protea Glen, Soweto and five in Thembisa. I need you to serve an

eviction notice on these occupants today. Are any evictions scheduled for today?"

The paunchy redhead jumped at the opportunity to speak and to impress the boss. "I have arranged for police back-up with the station commander at Thembisa Township. I need to evict at house number 1402 Khumalo Street and at 34 Moses Sibiya Street," he said proudly. For a brief moment, it felt like I was in a time warp and back in the police.

"Guys, go with Rob and get those people out," the boss barked from behind his desk.

On our way to Thembisa Township, I travelled with Sean. We clicked immediately and spoke at length about our backgrounds. He told me that all the guys were ex-policemen. They had been stationed at different police stations in the Joburg area and in different units, but all were either medically boarded or had resigned.

After a forty-five-minute drive, the convoy we travelled in arrived at Thembisa Police Station. We stood in the parking area chatting and getting to know each other, while Rob went to the charge office and returned a while later. He instructed us to follow the police van, which would take us to number 1402 Khumalo Street. On our way to the township, Sean told me that evictions need to happen swiftly and before they attract the attention of the locals.

We parked in front of the house and noticed that although the front door was closed, a Toyota Corolla was parked next to the house. Stealthily and quickly, we walked to the front door with the two policemen behind us. Rob knocked on the door, demanding entry. There was silence inside the house. Without warning, Rob started to kick the door until it broke at the hinges and flew open.

Suddenly, a woman's screams and the sound of crying children emitted from inside the house. Rob and Geoff rushed in and grabbed the screaming woman and told her to shut up, but their mere presence scared the woman and children even more, and their frantic screams grew louder. I remained outside the house and wondered how I was to defend myself when I was unarmed. Rob and Geoff started to gather the personal belongings, carried them out of the house, and dumped them on the sidewalk outside.

Within minutes, a crowd gathered in front of the house in the street. Rob and Geoff took no notice of them and continued to remove property from the house. I sensed that the situation could spiral out of control as the crowd became more vocal.

With every passing minute, the crowd grew larger, and soon, there were more than fifty men and women protesting in front of the house. Some men were armed with *knobkerries*, while the teenagers armed themselves with stones and half bricks. The two constables tried to calm the crowd, but their pleas fell on deaf ears.

The woman came running out of the house with a screaming baby on her hip. She was followed by older children who were also screaming uncontrollably. Their presence did nothing to calm the situation, and the sympathetic crowd started to throw insults at us, threatening to kill us if we came to this township again.

Rob and Geoff were experienced evictors and took no notice of the unruly crowd. They continued to remove property from the house and dump the belongings on the pavement. Without warning, a half brick smashed through the lounge window, causing the constables to grab their pistols. This aggravated the crowd, who grew louder and more impatient.

Soon, I was running for cover as rocks and bricks pelted the house from every direction. The woman with the baby on her hip was scrambling frantically to gather her possessions. The crowd showed no interest in her and kept their focus on us.

The constables fired two warning shots into the air, and the teenagers scattered for cover. The older men and woman stood their ground and continued chanting. I heard the sirens of Casspirs in the distance and realised that backup was close by. Three Public Order Police Casspirs arrived at the house, and the occupants started firing teargas and rubber bullets at the crowd.

People scattered in all directions. It was a welcome relief that backup had arrived. Once all property was removed from the house and placed on the sidewalk, Rob placed a lock and chain around the security gate and the front gate. He got into his vehicle smiling, and we sped off, leaving the woman on the sidewalk with her children and her belongings.

Most evictions ended this way, and by the second month, I realised that I wasn't getting any younger and that it was just a

matter of time before something tragic would happen. I appreciated the opportunity, but it was time for me to move on.

I heard of a vacancy at a construction company. This company was contracted with insurance companies and needed a site foreman. I knew absolutely nothing about construction but had nothing to lose by applying. During the interview, I made it very clear that I had no knowledge or experience in construction but was willing to learn. I think it was due to my honesty and willingness to learn that I landed that job.

I was given a team of five guys, and we had to replace ceilings where geysers had burst and paint the ceilings and walls. Fortunately, my guys were experienced at ceiling installation and painting, so I learned from them.

Every morning, work started at 6 am. Staff stayed on the office premises and were required to wash the vehicles whilst the four foremen were briefed and handed their job cards for the day. It was a standing rule that if a team did not complete thirty thousand rand's worth of work between Monday and Friday, that team would paint a house in the township to make up the shortfall over a weekend.

After working for this company for three months, I felt I knew enough about ceilings and painting to start my own business.

One big lesson I learned early in business is that you're only as good as your staff. I employed a countless number of painters and ceiling installers before I found reliable guys. Soon, I had enquiries about small building projects, and again, I paid the `school fees'. Not only did I not know what building entailed, but I also didn't know how to quote. Often, I underquoted or had to pay another builder to rebuild or fix the building work that was done.

As time went by, I accumulated good staff and got the knack of quoting. Within a few months, I heard of a building tender and thought I had built small garden walls, so building a house could surely not be that difficult. The site was in Soweto, just west of Joburg.

The contractor who built the best house would be awarded a hundred-house contract. All I saw were dollar signs,

but I had no idea what I was getting myself into. I arrived at the building site in my small van. Other competing contractors were already on site, each with a double cab or neatly wrapped vehicle with their company's logos. They stood around chatting as if they knew each other. Some were smoking whilst others quenched their thirst with an energy drink. All these contractors wore short pants and spoke Afrikaans. Stands were neatly demarcated with cordon tape.

At 10 am sharp, the municipal manager arrived in a black BMW SUV. He walked towards us, being followed by a black lady carrying a large folder under her arm. He called us together before introducing himself and his assistant. He explained that we were to be assigned a stand and would be given plans for the proposed building. He instructed that this project also involved job creation and that each contractor would be assigned four males and a female, whom we needed to employ throughout the duration of the project.

As luck has it, my stand was behind a street-facing stand, sandwiched between stands, not leaving much space for deliveries and storage. Also, the four men that were assigned to me were nothing but school leavers with no building experience, and the woman was so big she couldn't push a wheelbarrow. I looked at the plans that were given to me. Never before had I read building plans and was instantly flung into a panic. My stand was already allocated to me, so I could not abandon the project. I needed to find a way to build this house.

I decided to phone a guy I had worked with doing insurance claims, but he also had never read building plans before and was of no assistance. Other contractors were hard at work setting out the foundations and instructing their workers to clear the site. I overheard two contractors discussing the NHBRC (National Home Builders Regulatory Association) inspection the next day. I had no idea what to do, so after clearing the site, I gave my workers the rest of the day off.

The following day, around 8, a white Isuzu double cab arrived at the building site. A smartly dressed black guy got out of the double cab clutching a clipboard. He walked to the closest stand and greeted the contractor, who was eagerly awaiting his inspection. He stood next to his open foundations and proudly greeted the inspector, who looked at the foundations briefly and

realised that this contractor knew what he was doing, so he nodded and moved to the next stand until he arrived at mine. I smiled at him sheepishly as no preparations had been made on my stand. Fortunately, the other contractors were hard at work with their own projects and didn't take much notice of my ignorance or lack of knowledge. Without saying a word, the inspector realised that I had no idea how to set out the foundations.

He smiled sympathetically at me and glanced at his watch. He took my building plans from me, opened the tightly rolled paper, and started to study the plans. He called one of my workers and pulled a tape measure from a clip on his belt. After instructing the worker where to mark the foundations, he told us how wide and how deep the foundations should be. He patted me on the shoulder and said that he would be back the following day to inspect the foundations.

The following day, at about the same time, the inspector arrived and walked directly to my stand. Other contractors were already hard at work setting out building profiles to get their building lines, so they didn't take much notice of me. The inspector looked at my foundations and asked my workers to make a few small adjustments until he was satisfied with the depth and width. He explained the ratios of concrete mix to cement and told us that the concrete should be a minimum of 200mm thick. He wiped beads of sweat from his bald head and said that he would be back the following day.

Step by step, this inspector took me through the building process until, finally, the house was complete. Other contractors had completed their houses a long time before and had left the site to wait for the outcome. Needless to say, I wasn't awarded the one-hundred-house contract, but I learned a lot about house building.

A few months later, a client asked if I could build him a double-storey house in an affluent area. I still don't know if I was brave or stupid to take on a project of that magnitude. I spent days on costing, and finally, I was satisfied I had covered all the aspects of this mammoth project.

Fortunately, by that time, I had employed reliable, experienced artisans. So I learned from them. The project went well until we reached the wall plate level. Just when I thought I

had everything under control, I was approached by my building foreman. While respectfully looking down, he asked me when the ribs and blocks would arrive. I looked at him, puzzled by his question. Noticing the confusion on my face, he explained that ribs and blocks are needed to install the suspended slab. I broke out in a cold sweat, and my jaw dropped as he spoke. I realised that I had not included the cost of ribs and blocks in my initial calculations. With the building plans under my arm, I hurried to my truck and sped off to the supplier.

On my way to the supplier I was furious with myself for not including the cost of the ribs and blocks. It meant that the cost would come out of my pocket. Other motorists stared at me as I pounded on the steering wheel as I drove.

A friendly receptionist greeted me as I walked into the air-conditioned building. I handed her the building plans and asked her for a quote for ribs and blocks, including delivery. She smiled again and disappeared into a back office. After a short while, she returned only to find me pacing up and down the lounge area, visibly angry at the situation. I was clearly irritated by this unwelcome cost, so she wasted no time handing me a computer printout. I glanced at the bottom line. The quote totalled thirty thousand rand.

The lady noticed the look of horror on my face and said softly; “Don’t forget to prop the slab at one-meter spacing for a minimum of twenty-one days.” She must have realised that I was about to explode, so she quickly returned to the back office.

I started to panic at the cost but realised I must get a quote on prop hire and find a way to get over the double shock. At the building equipment hire shop, I handed a young man my plans and asked him for a quote for prop hire. After examining the plans for a while, he leaned over his desk for his calculator. Within a few minutes, he handed me an official quote. As I looked at the bottom line, my heart skipped a beat. The total cost amounted to eighteen thousand rand.

On my way back to the site, I frantically wondered how to raise thirty thousand rand and another eighteen thousand rand, without the client realising my mistake. My business was still in the infant stage, and the last thing I needed was a bad reputation. There are literally hundreds of contractors in Joburg, and competition is rife.

By the time I arrived on site, I had calmed down and started to think clearly. I realised that I could stall the building for maybe two weeks as the plumbers and electricians had to do their bit. I was fortunate that I could complete smaller projects, which would fund this project. The double-storey house was completed, and the client was none the wiser about my miscalculations. I looked forward to the next project, which was to show a profit after three months of making no money.

In 2004, on a Saturday morning, I was lazing around, still staying in the same house where I had rented a room when I arrived in Joburg. The landlord had met a lady and had moved in with her, leaving me alone at the house. While just relaxing, I heard someone calling at the front gate. I knew that it was someone looking for a job, so I ignored the calling, hoping that person would become impatient and leave, but the more I tried to ignore the calling, the more this person continued yelling.

I forced myself off the couch after mumbling a few swear words and walked to the front door. To my surprise, I saw a middle-aged white guy at the gate. He noticed me at the front door, and I realised I could no longer pretend to be ignorant of his presence. He introduced himself as Lesley and apologised for disturbing me. He then asked if he could paint the house roof, to which I replied I was not the owner and was only renting. He struck up a conversation, and soon he started talking about religion. He must have noticed my impatience as I tried a few times to turn around and go back inside, but this did not stop him.

Eventually, after trying to persuade me to come to church, he said that he was looking forward to seeing me at church on Sunday. I nodded in agreement, knowing very well that I had no intention of attending his church.

The following Saturday, I heard Lesley at the gate again. Even though I thought of hiding, I realised that my van stood outside as a dead giveaway that I was at home. Lesley again outstretched his hand and greeted me with a friendly smile. He said that he noticed my absence at church and wanted to know if he could fetch me for church the following day. The only excuse that came to mind was that I could not make it as I needed to work. Lesley shook his head and told me that he would fetch me the following Sunday. I hesitantly agreed to his request. I thought

if I gave in to his request just once, he might stop harassing me at home with this church stuff.

The following Sunday, I heard a car hoot at my gate. Lesley, with his unmistakable grey hair, sat in the driver's seat. When we arrived at a tennis club, I thought it was a strange place to hold a church service, but I was there, and there was no way of getting out of it now. The doorman greeted me with a big smile, and I was taken aback when he hugged me. There were no more than twenty people in this church, and everyone welcomed me with open arms. It was rather strange when they prayed in tongues. I had never experienced this before and wondered what foreign language was being spoken. After the service, the doorman, who introduced himself as Bill, introduced me to his wife, Sonja and their three children, Devan, Michael and Celine. His friendliness attracted me to the church, so I decided to attend again the following Sunday.

Sonja and Bill liked me, and Sonja took pity on me for being a bachelor and not taking good care of myself. Soon, Sonja invited me for dinner, and Bill enjoyed his braai. The children were still young. Celine was only four at the time; whenever I came to visit, she would run up to me and cling to one of my legs. She would laugh uncontrollably, with a mouth of missing teeth, as I tried to drag her along the grass as I walked.

Sonja soon became my best friend, and she had a big influence in my growth as a Christian. When a cottage next door became available, I snatched it up and became their tenant and neighbour. I spent most of my spare time with Bill and Sonja, which was in stark contrast to my life in the pubs. I enjoyed watching the boys play rugby, and they filled a void in my life as I longed for my son, who stayed with his mother, and I only saw him about three times a year.

Bill became ill and died of cancer a few years later. Tony (my son from my first marriage) had completed his schooling and moved to Joburg to be with his dad/me. Sonja asked Tony and me if I could rent in her home as she was left with three children still at school and needed the extra income. I gladly obliged, and Tony and I became her tenants. A few months later, I married my best friend, and we hope to renew our vows next year when we'll be married for ten years.

We had the pleasure of having my mother stay with us for her last few years. She loved her grandchildren, and her flat was comfortable with the way she arranged all her favourite things. She loved watching rugby with us and always made an effort to be a good host. We recall how she could sit with her crocheting for five days watching test cricket, often keeping score on a notepad beside her. We often talk and think of her and miss her dearly. Only once she died did I realise what an impact she had on the children. After her passing, the children had lost their rock, and each of them went off the rails in their own way.

I had developed severe back ache. I put this lower back pain down to all the years I played rugby and was referred from one doctor to the next, but they couldn't establish the cause until I was eventually referred to a specialist. After a series of X-rays and blood tests, he concluded that I suffer from a condition called Ankylosing Spondylitis, commonly known as `bamboo spine'. Doctors refer to this condition by an abbreviation, `Ang¬spon'.

This specialist treated me for a few years before referring me to a professor who specialised in this condition and other similar arthritic conditions. This professor treated me for years, comparing blood results with previous results. A determination regarding the progression was made every time I had a consultation. Ten years had passed, and despite the treatment I received, the condition deteriorated to the point where my spine had fused. My condition was debilitating and hampered my mobility, forcing a hunch in my spine.

The professor sat behind his desk and carefully studied the blood report again. He looked at me with great concern and finally broke the silence. "It's with reluctance and sadness that I must tell you that this condition is uncurable."

During one of the consultations, he told me that despite the treatment, which is used on cancer patients, the deterioration was accelerating, and there was a great possibility that I would be bound to a wheelchair by the age of fifty. This condition not only caused fusion of the spine but affected my hips too. I continued the treatment until I relocated to Joburg.

As the years went speedily by, my condition deteriorated, and constant backache became part of my life. I no longer lived a normal life and was declared disabled. My wife and I decided that

she would take ownership of the company. I applied for a disability grant and was pronounced permanently disabled.

Years ago, when I was more active than today, I managed a site. We needed to renovate this home, which also required plastering the gable wall above the garage door. I climbed the scaffolding to assist my staff. Once I reached the top, I stood on the scaffold plank and started to assist with plastering this wall. I stepped backwards and fell about four meters. I landed on my back on the paving. My staff managed to get me up and helped me to the van. My wife was my crutch for about two weeks before I could walk without assistance.

All these years later, I still suffer the effects of PTSD. I often `run' in my sleep, but fortunately, my wife has become accustomed to my restless ways. I wake up in a cold sweat, and my hands constantly squeeze and release as I clutch any part of my wife's body, whichever part of her body is closest to me. The spectacular Highveld storms keep me awake at night. The sudden crack of thunder makes my heart pound in my chest, and the sudden flash of lightning against the dark sky reminds me of flares and the explosion of phosphorous grenades. The painful screams of dying women and children echo in my mind.

A few months ago, I suffered a stroke and was hospitalised for sixteen days. Fortunately, the stroke only affected three fingers on my left hand. I had nine doctors and two HoDs treating me. They used my time in hospital to conduct every possible X-ray, scan, sonar and test possible, including blood tests three times daily.

The bottom third of my spine is completely fused, resulting in no lower back movement. I suffered a fracture to my C6 and C7 vertebra. The C6 is regarded as one of the most important vertebrae as it supports the neck. Doctors have warned that the DAX scan indicates that my vertebrae are extremely brittle and that I am likely to fracture my back. I was warned to be extremely careful as a sudden jolt could further fracture the C6, which will result in the spinal cord becoming damaged or exposed, which will result in paralysis. The vertebrae in my neck are almost non-existent due to the low bone density.

Specialists fear that the spinal cord could become exposed, leading to paralysis. I was diagnosed with arthritis and am prone to gout, due to medication. All other conditions like two ulcers,

an umbilical hernia, collapsing veins, an enlarged liver and prostate, kidney function at between 23 and 25%, swollen legs from bad circulation and a heart condition all seem unimportant in comparison.

Since my stay in the hospital, I have a new sense of urgency to write and complete this book, not only to pass it to my wife and kids so they can have a better understanding of my ways, but I felt writing this book has been therapeutic and a way of dealing with my past.

*

The author passed away on 7th October 2021.
He was 53 years old.

PART TWO

Novelisations of Some Cases

Shit, I hate this place! I always have and probably always will. The memories I have of this place are horrific and terrifying and will most probably haunt me for the rest of my life. The thoughts of what I have done and witnessed here bring cold shivers down my spine every time I come here. I have been here on a few occasions, but this time it was under very different circumstances.

On previous occasions, I was on the other side of the law. I was a well-respected cop who played hard and drank even harder, and even when the odds were stacked against me, the murder was solved. I had a reputation for an unorthodox manner of investigation, but the end result remained the same: complete and utter satisfaction that justice had been achieved, no matter the cost.

I had never been escorted into the prison before, and this was my first time entering through the main entrance. On exiting the enclosed Toyota Canta truck, I was escorted to the reception area, together with twenty other inmates awaiting trial, who had been remanded in custody until their next court appearance. These inmates were incarcerated for a variety of different crimes, but I knew all too well that only inmates who had committed Schedule 1 offences were remanded to this facility. Schedule 1 offences include all violent crimes, including armed robbery, rape and other similar violent offences.

At the reception area, we were made to sit along the wall on our haunches and were removed individually and escorted to our respective holding cells. The sound of ice-cold steel ankle chains against the highly polished concrete floor echoed down the corridor as I was flanked by two middle-aged overweight wardens. Each held me by the arm and my hands were cuffed behind my back. I winced at the pain of the cuffs being too tight but was shown no mercy by the warders. Butterflies filled my stomach with every step I took.

Every passing minute I was edging closer to my holding cell, and the thought of being recognised by an inmate made my heart beat faster and brought beads of sweat to my brow and upper

lip. This place was cold, not only because of the morbid, depressing conditions but also because of the size of the heavily burglar-barred windows, which restricted any form of natural light from coming through. An average adult male would find it difficult to escape through the windows because they were built above head height. It briefly occurred to me that this prison was built during the apartheid era, and no cost was spared to prevent an inmate from escaping, especially political prisoners who were detained there without trial for up to ninety days.

We finally reached the end of the corridor, only to be met by a heavy steel security gate. One of the wardens promptly entered a code into the keypad, and I heard the heavy steel lock click open.

After another shorter corridor, we finally reached the holding cell where I was to spend the next seven days awaiting a bail application. A warden removed a large key from his belt and unlocked the security gate and then the heavy steel door. Once he had unlocked the security gate, he removed the ankle chains. Instantly, I felt blood rush to my feet, and I exhaled a sigh of relief. I now only had to contend with the rawness of my skin, which I sneered at, as I thought of the physical and emotional pain that lay ahead of me. My handcuffs were removed before a warden pushed the heavy steel door open and pushed me inside the cell. The force of being pushed caused me to stumble forward, and I almost lost my balance. I heard the heavy steel door being slammed shut behind me. As I looked up, I suddenly realised that I was alone and I missed the wardens who provided a strange sense of security.

The stench inside the cell was unbearable. The smell of sweat, urine, shit, fear, rotten feet and stale cigarette smoke was overwhelming. I briefly covered my nose to breathe through my mouth, but quickly realised that the inmates were looking at me. I didn't want to appear to be weak, so I quickly dropped my hand to my side and tried to breathe normally. I felt instantly nauseous, but forced myself not to vomit but couldn't stop the gag. I last ate that morning at the court holding cell. It wasn't much, but I had a quarter loaf of brown bread, known as a "*kaaskop.*" (cheesehead) and a cup of warm, weak tea.

All the inmates stopped what they were doing and turned and stared at me. Bodies were scattered all over the cell. Some

stood near the burglar-barred windows, while others lay on their beds. Some had gathered in small groups, while others wandered around aimlessly. I heard some inmates start to whistle, but I took no notice of them; others just lifted their heads slightly but just long enough to glance at me before replacing their heads on their mattresses.

Slowly and awkwardly I walked forward, hoping none of the inmates wouldn't recognise me. Fortunately, for me, I did not look like a cop. Most cops can be spotted a mile away, but thanks to my training and years of service as an undercover operative, I had the ability not only to infiltrate gangs and syndicates but also to converse with just about anyone at any level. I had a good general knowledge of politics, crime, religion, and sex, and I could discuss anything with anyone about anything. I can be friendly and likeable. People trusted me, and I could befriend them quite easily. I have a persuasive personality and a natural ability to be quite convincing, especially in tight situations or when I feel my cover was blown or about to be exposed. Training and experience taught me that it is often better just to listen and not speak. It is also a persuasive tactic to just nod in agreement, even if one should disagree or know what is being said, which is a load of hogwash.

I learned only to ask questions that make the other party believe I am in awe of what they are saying or to ask for clarity. Soon, I gain their trust, and all information is revealed. My appearance also counted in my favour. With shoulder-length curly dark hair and a gold sleeper earring in my left ear, I could be anyone I pretended to be, from a drug lord to a right-wing activist. I was fluently bilingual, and even though I grew up English-speaking, people would have no inclination that English was my preferred language as my Afrikaans were equally fluent. I could also hold my own in Zulu and enjoyed listening to conversations concerning me without others knowing that I understood perfectly well what was being said. My large frame served as a visual deterrent, and I came across as a bit of a thug or troublemaker. People would rather back out of a fight at the mere sight of me, and my arrogance and confidence gave me the edge.

At Police College, many years prior, our physical education trainer and also well-known boxer would pair us according to

size. He would then instruct us to fight in a boxing ring. Each round would last for three minutes, and usually, by the third round, the trainer was satisfied with a victory, or that one guy was injured badly enough for him to warrant the fight over. If he felt the two contesters weren't hitting each other hard enough, he would extend the number of rounds until his vindictive, sadistic needs were met. Very often, these bouts would result in one or both guys collapsing from total exhaustion, huddled face down in tears of frustration. I only realised much later in my career how important those bouts were. Not only did he make men out of us at an early age, but it also eliminated any fear we had of confrontation.

The state had spent so much money on me, and I now appreciated all the training I had received, including advanced combat and SWAT training, counter insurgence, riot and crowd control, just to name a few, outside of the extensive detective training over the years.

As I slowly walked forward, towards the far end of the cell, I was fully aware of the dangers that lurked in my midst. I did a rough head count as I continued to walk with my head held high and chest puffed up like a prize cock before a fight. I estimated there to be about thirty-eight inmates, of which only four were white. There were only five double bunk beds on either side of the cell, totalling twenty beds. These steel frame beds were fitted with a sponge mattress and a single hard-haired grey blanket, commonly known as a "dog blanket". The mattresses were well-used and stained. Each mattress could easily be ten years old, and those fortunate enough to sleep on a bed, guarded this prize possession as if their lives depended on it. I soon learned that some form of status was attached to sleeping on a bed. Sleeping on a bed was usually a privilege awarded to those who had been incarcerated for years awaiting trial or gang or tribal leaders.

I glanced across the cell and noticed a group of inmates who looked like gangsters standing along the cell wall near the only windows. They were easily identifiable by their skulls and daggers tattoos, and gold nuggets in their front teeth. Some had the number 26 or 28 tattooed on their forearms and chests to represent the gang they belonged to. The 26s were notorious for sexual crimes, whilst the 28s were known for violent crimes such as armed robberies and murders. I read up about the 26 and 28

gangs and their origin during my studies. I learned that the 26 gang was formed initially in the Natal Midlands near Bulwer, to be exact, by two brothers. They lived in caves and hid in the mountainous areas around the central Drakensberg area. These brothers used young boys who wanted to become gang members to commit house robberies, petty thefts and stock theft from the local farmers. One of the brothers, would reward the boys by having sex with them, very often against their will. Sometime later, the other brother voiced his disapproval, resulting in the two brothers going their separate ways. The older brother subsequently formed a new gang called the 28. He decided to intensify robberies in the area, and these robberies became more violent. He hoped that his increased efforts would put his brother out of "business," and soon, he could take control of the entire Midlands area. His efforts proved to be in vain because his brother and rival gang leader also intensified crime in an attempt to gain control of the entire area.

Over the years, these two gangs became the most feared and notorious gangs in the country, and their influence spread across all provinces and infiltrated prisons and police holding cells. These gangsters were incarcerated for a variety of violent crimes and were absolutely ruthless. Anyone of them could, in an instant, pull out a homemade dagger concealed under their shirt and stab another inmate to death. Often, inmates who wanted to become members had to prove their worth by killing another inmate or were forced to perform sexual favours on the cell leader.

The 26 and 28 gangs still exist today. They tend to thrive in poorer communities, where drug and alcohol abuse are the order of the day. This phenomenon has continued over time, and still, the 26 gang is renowned for violent crime, whereas the 28 gang is renowned for sexual crimes. I recalled that during one of the courses I attended, I learned about the 27s. This breakaway gang only operated within the prison service. An interview was conducted with the founder of the 27s. He was incarcerated at Polsmore Prison in Cape Town. During the interview, he described that he was sentenced to six years imprisonment for murder. He was seventeen years old at the time. The interviewer interrupted by announcing that he was now imprisoned for one hundred and thirty years. His initial sentence was extended

according to the number of inmates he killed. The convict explained that when an inmate arrived at the facility, he needed to be a member of 26, 27 or 28. As part of his initiation, he would have sex with this newcomer, and if the newcomer resisted, he would kill him. Every time he killed an inmate; his sentence would be extended accordingly. The now forty-five-year-old would also instruct a newcomer to kill a warden or other inmate as part of his initiation. He would decide and instruct who should be killed and how.

I briefly scouted my surroundings and decided that the best area to lay my head would be near the bathroom entrance. There, I could remain unnoticed and hopefully undisturbed. I would have to deal with the constant flow of foot traffic and the occasional screams emanating from the bathroom, but that was a small price to pay for remaining unknown. I would need to accustom myself to the smell of faeces on the walls and urine on the floor, but that right now was the least of my worries.

As I started to make myself comfortable on the hard, cold concrete floor, I heard guys shouting excitedly. I looked in the direction where the commotion came from and noticed most of the inmates had formed a circle in the centre of the cell. They were cheering excitedly, and some waved their fists in the air, directing instructions to two inmates at the centre of the circle. I recognised that instructions were shouted in Zulu, and a few inmates shouted instructions in a language I did not understand. Soon, I realised that two younger inmates were about to fight. The Zulu boy was insulting his opponent by saying that he should not be in this country and that Zimbabweans are here to commit crimes and steal jobs. Both boys had each other by the shirt whilst exchanging insults. I listened briefly, trying to show little interest in what was about to happen when, suddenly, the boys came to blows; the Zulu boy was the more dominant of the two. He delivered several blows to his opponent's face, and soon thereafter, the Zimbabwean boy fell to the floor. The older and more senior inmates didn't move. They just sat on their beds and watched while the younger guys started chanting as if they realised the Zulu boy had gained the upper hand and they wanted to see more. They encouraged the Zulu boy to end the fight, which ultimately meant the death of the Zimbabwean boy. It was apparent that the majority of onlookers supported the Zulu boy.

The Zulu boy reached into the back of his pants and produced a sharp object resembling a sharpened toothbrush without bristles. The foreigner jumped quickly to his feet to defend himself, but before he could properly balance himself, the Zulu boy lunged forward and pushed the sharpened object deep into his abdomen. Blood squirted from the wound as the foreigner shrieked in pain. He fell to the floor, bleeding profusely from the open gash on his abdomen. He lay on the ice-cold floor gasping for breath and placed both his hands over the open wound in an attempt to restrict blood loss, but his efforts were in vain. His terrified eyes started to roll backwards in his skull as he started to lose consciousness. The onlookers cheered at the sight of the dying boy, raising their clenched fists and voices, knowing that the boy was about to die. They encouraged the wounded boy to get up and fight, but I knew this wouldn't happen. The boy was losing his life fast, and I noticed the all too familiar look of death on the dying boy's face.

`Shit, if this is what it's going to be like in here, the next seven days are going to be interesting,' I thought to myself. The last thing I wanted was to get involved in a fight, whether for entertainment or not. I had to remain calm and ensure my attendance in court. I could not stay in this hellhole for a day longer than I should. I needed to fight for my freedom.

The noise emanating from the cell alerted the guards. Within minutes, I heard the security gate and cell door being unlocked, and in stormed four guards. These guards were dressed in black trousers, black long-sleeved shirts and a black beret, each displaying an array of badges on their sleeves and chest. They also appeared larger than the normal wardens, who wore brown pants and equally ugly brown shirts. Each guard was armed with a baton and a tear gas canister.

Fortunately, during my crowd control training, we learned about the effects of tear gas and how to minimise the effects. As the four guards rushed in, they started swinging their batons wildly from side to side. They held a tear gas canister in the other hand and were ready for any resistance. The bystanders scattered in all directions at the sight of these guards. Some ducked their heads hoping they would not become a victim of the dreaded baton.

The guards started shouting orders in an intimidating manner, and soon, the situation was under control. All inmates had returned to their respective sleeping areas and remained quiet, allowing the guards to view the deceased boy.

The guards stealthily approached the dead boy, whilst also keeping a close eye on the inmates. One guard knelt beside him and briefly felt his pulse. They knew that he was dead. They got up and swiftly headed back towards the door. They displayed no emotion or facial expression at all. This was either part of their training, or this was a regular occurrence. The guards remained at the cell door, which remained slightly ajar, and looked inwards, still with their batons and tear gas canisters in hand.

A few minutes later, two men walked into the cell carrying a stainless-steel tray, the kind I had seen so often before at the state mortuary. They were dressed in white with a green plastic apron, white gum boots and green gloves. Without uttering a word, they carelessly rolled the corpse onto the tray, covered him in a green plastic sheet and carried him out of the cell. One guard pointed to an inmate who was innocently sitting on his bed and instructed him to get up and clean the pool of blood on the floor. The guards slammed the steel door shut, locked it, locked the security gate behind them and left. A sense of calm returned to the cell. The hysteria was all but a horrific memory.

I sat on the cold floor for a while before it became a reality that I would sleep on the floor, and this would be my home for the next week.

I noticed that one of the other white guys had also positioned himself near the bathroom door, away from others who occupied the beds at the sides of the cell. I assumed that he had probably arrived in this hell hole quite recently because the recent events that had just occurred had startled him. He was visibly upset and kept to himself. He sat shaking on his blanket with his legs crossed in front of him. His head bent down as he stared at the floor, avoiding eye contact with anyone. He just sat without uttering a word. I, too, didn't want to make eye contact with anyone as I felt the situation was still very volatile and didn't want the slightest gesture to spark an argument, so I just sat cross-legs and stared at the floor, engulfed in my own thoughts.

As evening broke, I heard a trolley being pushed along the corridor. The sound of the squeaking wheels and the sound it

made as it crossed over the joints in the concrete floor was unmistakable. I gathered that this was dinner. Moments later, the cell door was unlocked and opened by a warden who had left the security gate locked. Two stewards, both dressed in green, pushed the plates of food into the cell from under the security gate. There was a sudden scramble towards the door as if the inmates had suddenly come alive. Naturally, under these circumstances, the whites were the last to get a plate of food, and I had to stand by patiently watching as the more senior inmates chose their meals first. I wanted to know if any food would be left after this feeding frenzy.

Finally, I managed to weave my way towards the security gate and pick up my stainless-steel plate and plastic spoon. With my dinner in hand, I headed back to my blanket. I stared at this plate of food, and I thought of how I spoiled my dogs. I wouldn't expect a dog to eat this food. My plate contained sloppy soup, a few beans and a piece of dry bread. I reluctantly brought a spoonful to my mouth, expecting the worst. It was worse than I expected, but hunger is the best chef. The food was totally bland and in desperate need of seasoning and a lot of salt. The plate in front of me smelt like rotten meat and had a pungent, sour smell. I opted for the bread only and pushed my plate aside in disgust. I sat on the floor, engulfed in my own thoughts. This was going to be a very long week.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the younger inmates staring at me. I realised they were staring at my food, so I signalled to them to take my plate.

During my first night in the cell, I realised that money is power, or any asset to barter with, for that matter. Cigarettes and dope were big assets as everyone wanted it, craved it and ultimately would do anything for it. I secretly removed a box of smokes hidden in my sock and offered one to the white guy who was nearest to me. He smiled gratefully, and together, we shared a cigarette. He had not uttered a word to me or anyone since my arrival. The cigarette broke the silence, and he thanked me below his breath in Afrikaans. His eyes remained fixed on the floor in front of him. I tried to make conversation by asking his name, but there was no reply, so I just left it at that.

Later that evening, we had another cell visit. These cell visits were performed by two wardens who unlocked the cell door, leaving the security gate locked. They peered into the cell to ensure that all inmates were behaving themselves. It soon became apparent that we had just had our last cell visit for the day, and it was now time to sleep.

Two young tattooed men, who looked like they grew up on the streets and belonged to a gang, rose from their beds and started to walk among the other inmates. They started to barter with each other and exchanged `gifts' they had received during the day from visitors and wardens. Some inmates had smuggled drugs into the prison in their "big pocket," which I learned is their arse. These guys hustled and made a substantial living behind bars. They had obviously been in here for some time, as they had created a well-established client base. After a while, some inmates got off their beds and started talking amongst themselves. Some seemed quite excited about their recently obtained possession and, without hesitation, started to roll a joint. A finger of marijuana was exchanged for a box of cigarettes, or sold for twenty rand. Mandrax was more expensive and more sought after. Only a privileged few that could afford it, could bribe a corrupt warden to smuggle Mandrax. A single pill would sell for as much as sixty rand. I remembered from the course I did many years ago with the now-disbanded SANAB (South African Narcotic Bureau) that the effects of marijuana could last up to twelve hours as opposed to the effects of marijuana, which only lasted about four hours. The "numbing" effects of Mandrax was what made it so sought after and so addictive. I would later witness a Mandrax addict sit on the floor with his head collapsed to one side with spit running from the side of his mouth, totally unaware of what was going on around him.

The white guy near me waved to one of the dealers, trying to draw his attention. One dealer swiftly moved towards us with a friendly smile, exposing a gold nugget in his front tooth. He bent down to listen to what this white guy had to say. All he said was "dagga," and he produced a tightly rolled up twenty rand note from his trouser pocket. The dealer smiled in acknowledgement and handed him a marijuana joint tightly wrapped in newspaper. Both parties smiled and went their separate ways. He then used the newspaper wrapping and rolled a joint. He sat with his back

against the wall and lit the joint, deeply inhaling the toxic smoke. I noticed a feeling of euphoria come over this guy as his body relaxed completely, and his eyes became mere slits. He smiled at me as he offered me a drag of his prize possession, and I accepted.

I suddenly felt a rush of euphoria come over me, and suddenly, I thought, What have you got to lose? `And if you can't beat them, join them, and what the fuck?' flashed through my mind in a split second as my thoughts raced uncontrollably.

After a long time, I started to lose all reality of time and space.

The white guy near me stretched out his right hand and said; "Jan Steyn," in a deep Afrikaans accent. For a moment, I was startled at the sound of his voice, as it broke the silence, and somehow, his voice brought me back to reality, even if it was for just a brief moment.

This was the first time he spoke. I felt rather irritated that he interrupted the space that I was in and that I was rudely brought back to reality. I blinked a few times before I reached out to him with my right hand and briefly replied," Peter."

We sat there for a while longer, not quite knowing what to say. I broke the silence this time and asked, "What you in for?" I was just being polite and trying to make conversation. My intentions were not to make friends. It was just a way of passing the time, but I preferred to be alone.

He briefly replied, "Murder," and continued staring up at the stained ceiling above. He lit the last piece of joint and savoured the toxic smoke as it filled his lungs before exhaling slowly through his nose.

I waited for a question in return, but none came, so I left it at that. I thought I would leave him to enjoy the euphoria before it disappeared totally.

After a while, I broke the silence and asked, "What happened?" He stared at nothing for a few moments before replying. I noticed that he wondered how to answer my question as he gave it some thought. Finally, he cleared his throat and started to speak.

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Jan explained that he had ten years of experience as a member of the South African Police. He was proud to be a police officer.

He studied and, because of his dedication, was quickly promoted through the ranks and was finally promoted to the rank of Captain. He served in the Security Branch in Pretoria. He was married, but they didn't have any children. He jokingly said he did not have time to make children as his first love just kept him too busy.

Jan loved his wife but had another equally, if not more important, wife, which was his career. Jan loved his job and lived for it. His life revolved around his career, and his wife knew all too well that, more often than not, she had to take a back seat in their relationship.

He recalled, as a young constable spending his little pay on leather holsters, handcuff holsters and crap he didn't really need. The canvas-issued holsters weren't good enough for him. He wanted the best and was not willing to settle for standard-issue gear. He wanted to stand out from the rest and always look his best. Jan was proud to be a policeman, and all he ever wanted to do was serve his country with pride.

His father was a retired police officer with forty years of service. He retired as a Colonel with an impeccable service record. Jan tried desperately to please his father and wanted his father to be proud of him. Jan's older brother, Dirk, also applied to become a police officer, but his application was rejected because he failed the aptitude test. The examiners came to the conclusion that under pressure, he could be a danger to himself and possibly also to others. Because of his quick temper, it was deemed that he might resort to excessive force.

By now, his story had drawn the attention of another white inmate who had moved closer to join us. He just sat and listened, hanging onto every word Jan said. "What are you in for?" I asked. "Rape, Murder," he replied in a Capetonian accent. "Hi, my name is Peter."

"John," he replied, as he continued to lay on the floor, quite contemptuous of these surroundings.

As the years went by, the pressures of his career started to take their toll, and the cracks started to show in his marriage. He would use every excuse in the book to avoid being at home. His wife's voice irritated him, and he found solace with his colleagues. Jan explained that he would volunteer for border

duties not because he loved the bush, but because he loved the freedom of being apart from his wife and preferred interacting with like-minded police officers. He enjoyed drinking excessively and, like true comrades, enjoyed capturing and torturing political detainees. He enjoyed the thrill and excitement of being a cop and loved the adrenaline rush. He told me that after he killed his first suspect, it affected him for weeks. He was engulfed in feelings of guilt and admitted that the use of alcohol saved him from having a nervous breakdown.

Thereafter, killing became much easier as he knew he could rely on alcohol to numb the effects of psychological trauma. It became such a thrill to raise his firearm and take a shot. The feeling the firearm gave him was that of power and control. He enjoyed the sound the firearm made, and it fitted perfectly in his hands as if an extension of his body.

Being a police officer in the apartheid years meant he had a licence to kill and loved doing so. The more people he killed, the more he drank. The more he drank, the more people he killed. His career became a cycle of violence and alcohol, just the way he liked it. Jan was admired by his colleagues and superiors, who recognised the fearless qualities he displayed and his diligence towards serving his country.

His second wife, Marietjie, was a sweet girl. She married Jan when she was only eighteen and dreamed of making a perfect home for her perfect husband. She had dreams of a perfect marriage, and dreams of a perfect life. She enjoyed staying at home and enjoyed cleaning their home. She loved all the little things that she had bought to make it a beautiful, happy home, but despite all her efforts, it never really felt like home. It was just a house occupied by two adults and a dog. Many a night she spent alone, not knowing where Jan was, if he was alive or dead, or when he would come home to her.

When Jan did come home, he would blame his absence on his career. The excuses were always the same. He was either investigating an important matter or was hunting some or other high-profile suspect. Marietjie knew better than to argue with him. She would smell alcohol on his breath, and if she dared to question him, the repercussions would often lead to her being physically abused. Make-up covered any signs of physical abuse, but nothing could hide the emotional scars she had experienced

for so many years. As time went by, they spent less time together, and Marietjie became increasingly lonely and depressed.

One night, Jan came home drunk. This was not unusual as Jan was drinking heavily at that time. Marietjie told him that his dinner was in the oven and that she would get it and join him in the bedroom. She hoped that they could just chat. She missed him so much, or maybe she missed the man she married so much. Marietjie enjoyed chatting with him when he was not too drunk, and sometimes, he would make her smile. She cherished those moments. She did not see him often and wanted so desperately for them to spend more time with him. She was willing to work on their marriage and so badly desired the same commitment from him, but he never had time! She did not always understand police work but always tried to show an interest in what he was doing. She was lonely and needed someone to talk to, but there was only so much conversation one could have with a drunk.

Suddenly, Jan stood up from the bed and flew into a drunken rage. He blamed her for being lazy and told her the house was filthy. He told her to immediately fetch his dinner and bring it to him with a beer. He was tired after working the whole day while she sat at home doing nothing. He continued to shout insults at her as she sat sobbing at the end of the bed with her hands covering her face.

Marietjie had heard all this before, but it still hurt as hell. She knew that in the morning, he would plead for her forgiveness, and she knew that when he was drunk, he would insult her again. She loved him and vowed to never leave him, so she tolerated his behaviour, hoping that one day he would change his ways and they could have a happy marriage again. Marietjie arose from the bed, wiped the tears from her cheeks with the back of her hands, and straightened her dress.

She asked that he sit on the bed and eat where he would be more comfortable. This would enable her to chat with him. She had missed him so much as it had been almost a week since he was home. Jan didn't reply and Marietjie left the room to fetch his dinner. While Marietjie was in the kitchen, Jan went to his socks drawer and removed the safe key. He quickly walked over to his cupboard and opened it. He unlocked the wall-mounted safe and removed his police-issue Beretta pump action shotgun. Jan cocked it and hurried to the bedroom door, which was left

open. He then hid behind the open door with the loaded shotgun in front of him, pressed tightly against his chest. He kept still and waited for his wife to return.

Marietjie entered the room carrying his dinner on a tray with a glass of beer. She stood near the door and looked around the room for him but didn't see him. There was an *en-suite* bathroom so she didn't take much notice as she assumed he was taking a leak. She placed his dinner tray at the foot of the bed and proceeded to her side of the bed. She flicked her long blond hair back in an attempt to look more attractive to her husband.

As she walked around the bed, Jan came out from behind the shadows and pointed the single-barrel Beretta pump action shotgun at her. He stared directly into her horrified blue eyes before firing a single shot. Marietjie didn't stand a chance. At that distance, the twelve-gauge pellets blew a hole in her chest and ripped her right arm from her body. Blood splattered against the wall behind her as her lifeless body fell on the bed.

Jan raised his eyes from the floor as he hesitated for a moment, glanced at his audience, and tried to clear his dry throat. Jan again signalled to the dealer and beckoned him closer. He pulled some coins from his trouser pocket and counted them. He gave the dealer a handful of coins in exchange for another joint. The dealer counted the coins before placing them in his pocket and handed Jan his merchandise. He again rolled a joint with the newspaper wrapping and lit it. After taking a drag, he passed it around, and the three of us shared and enjoyed the high the cannabis gave us.

It took Jan a while to gather his thoughts before continuing. He explained that he tried to convince his colleagues, who had attended this gruesome scene, that an intruder must have killed her and that he had found her dead on his arrival at home, but nobody believed him. The evidence against Jan was overwhelming, and after a two-year High Court battle, Jan was convicted of murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. He served only ten years of his sentence and was released on parole for good behaviour.

I listened intently and often found my mouth open in amazement. This was a confession of a killer at its best. I nodded appropriately and asked a question from time to time, just as an indication that I was interested in what he had to say and that I was listening intensively to what he was telling us.

This is an interrogation technique. The storyteller is comfortable enough to tell the whole story and gets the approval from his audience. Sometimes, it makes them feel important as they boast about their achievements, or they receive some form of redemption for their heinous crimes.

I had no idea what time it was as nobody wore a watch. All watches are removed and kept behind lock and key until our next court appearance. At the next court appearance, inmates are released on bail, released on their own recognisance, sent to a police holding cell, stand trial, and, if convicted, sent to the other side of the prison, where prisoners get proper meals together with all the other privileges, or they are acquitted and sent home.

Jan's story intrigued me so much that I encouraged him to tell me more. After all, this was not a bad way to spend my first night in prison.

Jan continued to explain, in his broken English, that he served ten years in Pretoria C Max prison. Whilst he was incarcerated, he met the notorious Piet Van Rensburg. Piet Van Rensburg had been arrested and detained on suspicion of kidnapping, child trafficking and murder. Jan explained that during his incarceration, he had spent a lot of time with Piet. Although Piet, at that time, was only detained as a suspect, they managed to spend time together in the courtyard for an hour a day, during which time they shared personal information. Jan was intrigued by Piet's mannerisms, and they enjoyed each other's company. Piet would laugh about how the investigating officer, known to be the province's top cop, would never be able to prove his case in court, even if the case went that far. Piet boasted that he was far too smart for the cops and laughed at how the investigating officer had his entire front yard excavated and how a team of forensic investigators spent days sifting through dirt looking for evidence of human remains but came up with nothing.

He boasted how easy it was to kidnap children and get away with it. Piet divulged that he preferred primary school

children because they were so gullible and were an easy target. Piet explained that he had a fascination with young girls and boys and thought they were so cute, especially when they were helpless, naked and in captivity. Watching the little girls and boys cry as he undressed them excited him. He loved the way they would try and cover their naked little bodies with their little hands. They were shy and ashamed and didn't realise he thought their naked little bodies were so perfect and flawless. He and his girlfriend would get aroused and make love in front of the naked girls and force them to watch and even partake in the orgy. He explained that he would often orgasm at the mere sight of their naked bodies before even having sex with them. He did not need to touch or fondle them to reach a climax. Their submission and the sight of their cute, helpless little bodies were enough to satisfy his sexual urges.

Piet explained that he and his female accomplice would sit in his construction vehicle in front of the school and just wait and watch. He was always well dressed, in a suit and tie, so as not to arouse any suspicion. After the third day of reconnaissance, they knew precisely which children were being fetched from school by their parents and which walked home. They would observe and identify their next victim. While the child was walking home, he would drive alongside the child, and his girlfriend would call them to the vehicle. He would tell them that he was the new pastor of a nearby church and would encourage the child to attend Sunday school. His girlfriend would offer the child a sweet bribe and ask them to accompany them to the church they should attend that Sunday.

It was all so easy. Once they had kidnapped the child, they would take the child to his home in Pretoria, where the child would be detained in the cellar. He and his partner would undress the child, usually a girl and perform sexual acts in front of her or force the little girl to perform sexual acts on them.

He would target different schools in different areas and never kidnap more than one child from any particular school. Piet's addiction towards sexual acts with little children quickly intensified. His female partner would also perform sexual acts on the girls to arouse him while he watched and masturbated. She had a fetish for threesomes and told Piet that the excitement of a threesome with a girl child would strengthen their own sexual

relationship. He would travel to faraway places, on the East, West and South Rand, and later to different provinces in search of new victims. He had kidnapped a total of twelve children: nine girls and three boys over a period of two years.

Piet, who was in his fifties, was finally arrested after a witness compiled a sketch of a man she had seen seated in a parked vehicle outside a school which her eight-year-old son attended. She could not describe the bakkie's make exactly but said it was beige in colour and could be a Ford Cortina or Toyota Marc 2. It appeared to be a construction vehicle with branding on the doors advertising a construction company, but she could not identify the branding or company name. Based on the description of the vehicle, which matched that of Piet's and the sketch by the eyewitness, Piet was arrested. He shook his head and explained that the children were long gone and would never be found.

"You must be shitting me! Rhe same Piet Van Rensburg that was all over the news in the late eighties?" I said in astonishment. Jan just smiled and nodded his head in agreement.

Jan knew the law, and he knew about the parole board. He knew that if he behaved, he could have his time in prison halved, so he volunteered as an assistant in the prison clinic. His duties involved mundane work performed by a cleaner or nurse. On his first day at the clinic, he was made to scrub and disinfect the floors, bedpans and commodes. He had to remove all bloody, soiled, dirty linen from the beds and take them to the laundry. Another task was to bed bath patients and feed those unable to feed themselves. Jan knew that things would improve and that he just had to persevere. Soon, Jan proved to be valuable in that department, and all appreciated his assistance. Every morning at nine o'clock, the doctor came to attend to the patients. By that time, Jan had already cleaned the patients, and they were prepped for the doctor.

When Jan first laid eyes on her, he thought she was full of shit. She was quite bossy and opinionated. She would shout orders at the nursing staff as she moved from one patient to the next, always keeping a professional posture and little expression. She was quite pretty with a slim, tall figure and dark shoulder-length hair. Her natural beauty was extenuated by her beautiful smile, full lips and perfect teeth. She must be a few years younger

than he was. He estimated that she was about twenty-five years old. Jan suspected that she was still doing her internship, and that she might not yet be fully qualified as a doctor.

For the first few days, Jan kept his distance and did whatever he was told, but he couldn't help but notice that she glanced in his direction at times but never stared at him or gave him any inclination that she might be interested in him. Jan's ice-blue eyes and blond hair had always attracted women, and his charm was a bonus. His time in prison had taken its toll on his facial features, and wrinkles and specks of grey were starting to show on his temples. He had kept his good physique by doing one hundred sit-ups and pushups every night.

Spending time together every day drew them closer together, and Jan could not deny the physical attraction they had for each other. They would chat briefly during breaks, and Jan learned that Sarie was a very lonely lady. She felt comfortable sharing her private life with him and told him that she had just come out of an abusive two-year relationship. She told him that her ex-boyfriend was a broker and made huge amounts of money. He squandered his money and had affairs. He lived the good life with his millions, and he showed off every cent. Friends and girlfriends were plentiful, and he made no secret that he was extremely wealthy and often bought her flowers or gifts, especially when she confronted him about an affair. He reminded her often that he wore the pants in their relationship, and if she didn't like it, she was welcome to leave. With his money and flashy lifestyle, any woman would love to leave her shoes under his bed.

She grew tired of the house parties, the booze, the cocaine, the golf outings, and being treated like shit, or having to spend many a night alone at home. She just had to smile and `be the happy hostess' at parties, and nobody dared know how lonely, miserable and unloved she felt.

One day, after yet another affair, she just couldn't take it anymore. She grew tired of the countless broken promises, so she packed her bags and moved into a furnished one-bedroom apartment in the city. She had wasted two years of her life being a sex object, and a trophy to an abusive man and was bitterly afraid to get into another relationship.

As the months went by, she and Jan spent more and more time together. She confided in him and started to trust him with her innermost secrets. After all, he was just a convict without a life, without a future, and she felt comfortable and safe with Jan. There were no pretences, no broken promises, and no expectations. He was only a companion and someone she could talk to.

Six years had passed, and Jan was about to be brought before the parole board. He had spent his time in prison and was eligible for parole. He showed true remorse for what he had done and the board felt that he had been rehabilitated and he was permitted to be integrated back into society.

The day Jan had waited for so long had finally arrived. His heart pounded with excitement when the guard opened the main entrance door for him and briefly greeted him as he walked out of the prison. Jan heard the large metal door slam shut behind him as he stared up at the blue Pretoria skies above. After a few deep breaths of city air, a smile broke out on his face. He was finally free. He looked across the street and noticed Sarie waiting for him beside her vehicle. She stood against her car with her arms folded across her chest, but when she saw him, she ran towards him, flung her arms around his neck and started to kiss him frantically.

Jan and Sarie were married a month later. They stayed in the one-bedroom apartment Sarie had rented for a few years. Sarie enjoyed her job and continued working at the prison clinic while Jan looked for a job. He wasn't quite sure what he wanted to do as he only had experience as a policeman. Any job would bring in an income, and he was not fussy. This was the beginning of his new life with his new wife, and he wanted to put all the police shit behind him.

Within a year, Sarie fell pregnant and gave birth to a beautiful blond-haired, blue-eyed boy. They decided to name him Michael, after Sarie's father. Jan's life finally felt complete. He loved his new family and loved being a father and husband.

After a year, Jan was still unemployed, and he became increasingly depressed. He left his CV at so many businesses that he had lost count, and nothing came of it. Finally, Jan received a phone call, which he had hoped for so long. He had a job

interview at a local supermarket as a packer. The manager told him that he was on a short list and Jan was convinced the job was his. He was so excited to start working. He and Sarie would lie in bed at night, and he would tell her what he would buy her and Michael with his first paycheque. He wanted to buy her a gold chain and buy Michael a big soft teddy. His life was about to change, and very soon, he would be the provider every husband and good father should be.

The following day, Jan dressed in his best attire and went to the interview. He couldn't stop smiling and walked with a bounce in his step. He could hardly contain his excitement. The store manager greeted him and welcomed him into his office. Jan sat confidently opposite the manager, and the manager again perused his CV.

"I see you were last employed in the South African Police, and that was seven years ago. Where have you worked since resigning from the police?" the manager asked, staring at Jan over the papers he held in front of him.

Jan suddenly felt a hot flush come over him. His mouth became instantly dry as he searched his brain for the answers, but none came. He simply stared back at the manager as he loosened his tie and wiped the sweat from his brow.

"Yes, well, where have you worked in the last seven years?" the manager repeated, obviously agitated by Jan's slow response.

Jan realised that it was better to tell the truth. The repercussions could be quite serious if he lied and was caught out later. The manager would appreciate his honesty, he thought. Jan leant forward slightly and cleared his throat before answering.

"I've been in prison, Sir. It was just a minor offence and, quite frankly, just a big misunderstanding."

Jan's words had hardly left his mouth when suddenly the manager stood up from behind his desk in a fit of rage. His fat face turned bright red, and his green eyes bulged out of their sockets. His gold-rimmed glasses became dislodged from his big purple nose as he jumped to his feet, which he promptly lifted back onto his nose with his middle finger.

At the top of his voice, he shouted out, "A minor offence, and you spent seven years in prison for that. Don't bullshit me. And what do you mean by a misunderstanding? Do you honestly

expect me to believe our courts are filled with idiots? Get out, you low life! You're wasting my time. Go and bullshit someone else. Just get out before I have you thrown out."

Shamefully, Jan rose from his chair and left the building without saying a word, his head tilted towards the ground. `How much more could go wrong, and how long will God punish me for something I did so many years ago?' he wondered as he ambled home.

When Sarie arrived home from work, she excitedly opened the front door only to be met by a visibly upset Jan. Jan explained to her what had happened during the interview, and he noticed tears of pity well in her eyes. She flung her arms around him and tried to console and comfort him, but all was in vain.

Over the next few months, Jan returned to his old habit of using the bottle. Sarie would return from work only to find him drunk. He got so drunk that he would pass out either on the couch or even sometimes on the floor. She tried to reason with him, console him and encourage him to keep trying, but Jan wouldn't listen. She also found out that Jan had begged for alcohol from the neighbours and from their newly made friends, and she was furious. She tried to get him to counselling or rehab, but Jan just wasn't interested. His life was a mess, he wasn't good enough as a husband and wasn't even good enough to get a job. He would spend the rest of his life with this very dark cloud hanging over him. His criminal record would be with him always, and he would never be the husband and father he hoped to be. He deserved booze and lots of it. Booze had never let him down before, and it wasn't going to let him down now.

"The fucking booze, hey? The downfall of many a good man. That reminds me, I could do with a drink right now, hey?" John said out of the blue, probably to break Jan's sombre mood.

Sarie stayed married to Jan in spite of his excessive drinking. She loved him dearly and tried to get him help on many occasions, but all her attempts were in vain. Over the years, his addiction to alcohol increased, and he eventually turned to drugs. He smoked pot as often as he could to numb the pain, but that also could not alleviate the pain Jan felt.

Michael grew up to be a very unhappy child. He often witnessed his father in a rage, smashing ornaments, punching holes in doors and generally causing havoc and mayhem in their home. His bedroom, which was also the lounge, was constantly in a mess. His mother would often come home after a hard day's work only to find their home in total disarray. She would spend at least two hours cleaning the apartment and then need to cook dinner. He noticed how his mother was verbally and physically abused by his father, and there was nothing he could do except cry.

He dared not confront his father out of fear of getting a hiding for being cheeky. When his father saw him crying, he would get shouted at. "Stop being a sissy," "Cowboys don't cry," or even worse; "Stop crying, or I'll give you something to cry about," then very often got a hiding anyway.

"Shit, that reminds me of my old man. He used to beat the crap out of me, too, for no reason," John said as he recalled moments of his shitty childhood.

When Michael started school, the damage caused by his abusive father was evident. He couldn't read well, and teachers estimated that he was at least two years behind his age group. He had developed a speech impediment and often stuttered or wet himself at the slightest thought of being in trouble. Sarie often had to take time off work to see the headmistress about Michael's behaviour.

Michael just wasn't coping with schoolwork, and it was suggested that Michael get professional help. During counselling, Michael was easily distracted and often found it difficult to express himself. He would be withdrawn into a world of fiction and imaginary friends. This was his happy place, away from adults, away from the shouting and temper tantrums he so dreaded.

When Michael was nine years old, Sarie couldn't take Jan's abuse any longer. The constant drug and alcohol abuse, and Jan's constant verbal and physical abuse proved to be too much. It got to the point that he would sexually assault her and often forced himself on her for sexual pleasure when she refused. She had tried to save him from himself for years, but all her attempts

proved to be fruitless, and she couldn't carry on like this any longer.

The final straw came when he threatened to kill her if she ever decided to leave him. She was aware of his violent past and feared that he might actually kill her in a fit of rage or a drunken stupor.

Sarie filed for divorce, which was uncontested. In spite of the numerous school reports and psychological reports Sarie handed in as evidence, in an attempt to gain custody of Michael, the court ruled that they should have joint custody over him. Jan was authorised visitation rights and was permitted to have Michael every fortnight on weekends and school holidays.

"What a bitch! She tried to take your *laaitie* from you. Typical! At least the court saw through her, and you shared custody. The same thing happened between my ex and me. She also tried that trick when we divorced. I might be a fool, but I'm an old fool," John said with a big grin on his face.

"I threatened to kill the bitch, so she agreed that we could share the *laaitie*. Shit, time flies; I can't believe he must be twenty, I think. I don't see much of him. He's been in juvie for about five years, poor *laaitie*. He tried to be like his old man and came short. Stupid fuck."

Jan's parents lived in Durban, and his father was enjoying his retirement years after retiring as a Colonel in the police. He had made friends with some local fishermen and spent most of his days on the beach fishing. Life was good, as it should be. He worked hard all his life, and now he could enjoy doing whatever his heart desired. His wife of forty-five years also enjoyed their new life at the coast. She and her husband would often walk along the beach holding hands, and they enjoyed catching up on all the years he had neglected her due to his work. They preferred to walk in the late afternoon, before sunset. It wasn't so hot then; they loved the cool breeze after a hot and humid day. She spent her days either baking for their church or spending time in the garden. Life was good, and they lived comfortably on his pension.

Early one evening, the phone rang as they were settling down for dinner. Johan jumped up to answer it. They had often debated on why they should have a phone. They didn't use it

much and very seldom received calls. They didn't own a cell phone and, frankly, weren't interested in one. Life was peaceful and simple without it, and that's how they liked it.

Johan answered the phone, thinking it might be a fishing pal or one of their friends from church.

Instead, it was Jan. He recognised his voice despite his slurred words. Jan didn't call often, and they hardly spoke. Johan still felt grieved that they were not invited to the wedding, but on the other hand, he was pleased that they weren't because he didn't really want to attend the wedding anyway.

Their relationship had been strained ever since Jan killed Marietjie, and as far as Johan was concerned, he didn't have a son.

"Ja boy," Johan said on the phone.

"Dad," Johan could hear Jan swallow at the other end before he spoke again. "Sarie and I got divorced, and I need a place to stay for a while," Jan said.

Shivers ran down Johan's spine as he thought of sharing his home with his son. His worst nightmare was about to come true, but he knew that if he refused, he wouldn't hear the end of it from his wife. He could imagine her saying; `He's your flesh and blood, and what would our church friends say if they heard you refused your son a home?' We need to be there for him in his time of need. It's what God expects of us as Christians. A mother's love always remains unwavering toward her children.

Johan didn't reply immediately. He held his breath for a few moments before Jan came back on the line.

"Please, Dad, it won't be for long. I have nowhere else to go"

"What about Michael?" Johan asked in a stern and slightly irritated voice.

"I have joint custody over him. He will stay with her, and he can visit me every fortnight over weekends."

"Let me discuss it with your mother; I'll get back to you," Johan replied while thinking of how he could break the news to his wife so that she would agree that their only son wasn't welcome in their home.

"Thanks, Dad. I love you."

`Bullshit,' Johan thought as he replaced the receiver.

"Was that Jan?" Johan's wife asked while she dished up.

"Ja," Johan replied without much enthusiasm. "He wants to come and stay for a while. He and Sarie got divorced."

"Oh, my poor boy. Things just never come right for him. He has such bad luck." Johan knew exactly where this conversation was heading, so he didn't even reply.

"So what did you say?" she asked with excitement in her voice. "When is he coming? Is he coming with Michael? I better wash the linen in the spare room tomorrow."

Johan had no chance to object. His mind had been made up for him, and there was no way of convincing his wife otherwise.

He also knew that Jan spelled trouble. "I said that we would discuss it and get back to him but there's obviously nothing to discuss."

"Right, you are," is all she said whilst nodding in agreement. That was the end of the conversation. They sat down for dinner without having much to say to each other. Johan knew that the only way to clear the air was to call Jan and tell him that he could come to stay. He would make it very clear that this would not be a permanent arrangement and that he had to get a job. No lazing around the house or sleeping 'til midday would be permitted.

After dinner, Johan made the call, which he dreaded. "Ja, it's okay," was all Johan said to the receiver. "Thanks, Dad. I'll catch the bus tomorrow" Johan was quite pleased that the conversation was kept so brief. He didn't have time to listen to Jan's bullshit and lies.

The following evening, Jan arrived by taxi from Durban railway station, where the bus had stopped. As he exited from the taxi, his mother ran towards him with open arms. She hugged and kissed him. "You've lost so much weight, my boy. Are you hungry?"

"No ma, I'm fine, thanks," said Jan as he headed towards the boot of the taxi to retrieve his luggage.

"Come inside. I made fresh rusks this morning. I remember how you used to love dipping rusks into coffee. Come eat. You must be exhausted."

As Jan entered the house, he felt tension between himself and his dad. "Ja" was all Johan said as Jan entered the house.

"Ja dad," replied Jan. "Come sit down, I'll make you a cup of coffee," his mom said.

`Fuck the coffee,' Jan thought, `I need a drink. On second thoughts, I better just do as they say. I won't be here for long. I have plans of my own.'

"That would be nice, thanks," Jan replied.

"So, what happened between you and Sarie?" Johan enquired while coffee was being prepared in the kitchen.

"What a bitch, dad. They're all the same. So cute and nice when you meet them, and that only lasts until you get married. Then they become demanding and controlling. You can't do this, and you can't do that. What a load of shit. They become so controlling. I'll never get married again, that's for sure. As a friend once told me, when you're in bed with them, you're the best thing since sliced cheese. When you're out of bed, you're just a piece of shit."

Just then, Jan's mother walked in carrying a tray with coffee cups and a side plate with rusks.

The conversation came to an abrupt end. Jan held his breath before he bad-mouthed Sarie any further, which would upset his dad. His dad always found fault in what he said, so it was better not to say anything.

"So, how's Michael, and how is he doing at school? He must be getting so big now." His mother asked, smiling. She tried to change the topic and ease the tension between Jan and his dad.

"Michael is doing just great, thanks mom. It's my weekend this coming weekend, and Sarie said that she would put him on the bus on Friday and that I should send him back to her on Sunday. I'm sure you'll be very surprised when you see him. What a clever boy that is, Mom. He takes after his grandmother."

"Oh, I'm so proud of you, my son; you've done such a wonderful job raising that boy, virtually on your own, with his mother hardly being there for him. I heard she spent most of her time at work, leaving you to raise the child virtually on your own. One would swear that she had no other responsibilities. Are you sure she wasn't seeing someone behind your back? You know what I mean. Women of today just can't be trusted."

"Ja, Mom, it has been tough, but he is such a good kid." Jan drank his coffee quite quickly. He was in no mood for

conversation with these two old farts. He stood up and said goodnight, and headed for the spare room. He locked the door behind him. He was alone at last. Now he could enjoy a joint in peace. As he lay on his bed smoking his joint, he thought of what Piet Van Rensburg had told him. He was sick of Sarie's shit, and it was time to make her pay big time.

The week dragged on with not much to do. Every so often, Johan would ask. "Have you found a job yet?"

Jan would just ignore the old man, not wanting to provoke him. Jan's mother tried to make conversation from time to time, but they really had nothing in common. They had nothing to talk about. She mostly spoke about her church, and Jan had no interest in Jesus. It was a lot easier to just keep to himself and think about what lay ahead.

Michael would be arriving by bus the following day, and Jan's parents were excited to see the young boy. It had been years since Jan, Sarie, and Michael had come to visit. Jan was excited for other reasons, which he kept to himself.

That night, Jan lay on his bed and slowly exhaled the Durban poison he had bought from an Indian fisherman earlier that day. He stared at the puffs of white smoke filtering into the air above and thought about his plans for the following day. He would need to make a few phone calls and set his plans in motion, and he kept rehearsing in his mind what he was going to say. The time of reckoning was drawing ever nearer. Jan fell asleep with a grin on his face. He couldn't wait to hear Sarie's reaction when the news broke.

The following day, Jan rose early. From his suitcase, he removed the leather-bound diary he had kept very secret. Not even Sarie knew of its existence. It contained all the information he received from Piet Van Rensburg all those years ago in prison.

When Jan was alone in his cell, he would secretly record every conversation he had with Piet, and Piet had given him contact names and numbers. The time had come to contact some very important people and set his plans in motion.

Jan left the house, diary in hand, and headed down the road towards a nearby shopping mall. He recalled having seen pay phones near the main entrance. On his arrival at the pay

phones, he opened the diary and flicked through the pages. He soon came across the name of Greta with her contact number.

He dialled the Cape Town dialling code followed by the number. It was quite early in the morning and Jan wondered if she would be awake. His excitement in talking to her kept him from waiting until a reasonable hour. He had never spoken to her before and wondered if he was taking the right approach. He decided not to doubt himself as he had rehearsed this conversation many times over to himself.

After four or five short rings, a woman's voice came through the other end of the phone. She answered in a heavy German accent.

"Hello Greta, my name is Jan. We haven't spoken before, but Piet Van Rensburg gave me your number." Jan heard how she cleared her throat before speaking, probably from too much smoking or maybe a heavy night out the night before.

"Yes, Piet," she replied. "How is he? I heard he was arrested?"

"Yes, yes that's where I met him, in prison. He said that you were the contact person and you could arrange a yacht. Know what I mean?"

"Yes, yes," she replied. "How many do you have, boys or girls?" she asked.

"Just one, a boy," he replied callously.

"And how old is this boy?"

"Ah, nine; yes, he is nine," Jan replied. Jan had to think about that for a moment as his mind was racing as he spoke.

"Perfect, I have a buyer in France who has been on my waiting list for a few months now. He wants a white boy. He is white, isn't he?"

"Yes, yes, he's white," Jan replied with a dry throat.

"Good, I'll arrange for him to transfer the funds today. You contact Carl Schmidt, and he'll tell you what to do next. Do you have his contact details?"

Jan flipped through the dairy quickly and came across Carl Schmidt's name and details. "Yes, yes, I do have it."

"Call me once he has taken delivery," and she abruptly ended the call.

Jan knew that Carl Schmidt owned a yacht that was docked in Durban harbour when not in use. Jan understood from

Piet Van Rensburg that Carl was the contact who would take kidnapped children by sea to Dar es Salam, where they would be handed over to another contact.

Jan cleared his throat again before examining the number more closely. He lifted the receiver, and with an unsteady hand, he dialled the number. It rang until he heard the engaged tone, as there was no answer. Jan cleared his throat and proceeded to dial the number again. It was only after about five or six rings that he heard the person on the other end of the line.

"Who is this?" asked the middle-aged German man.

"Morning Carl, my name is Jan. Greta said I should contact you," Jan said, trying not to sound nervous.

"That bitch. She still owes me money. Fuck her. What does she want?" Sounds like this guy doesn't take shit or was woken up by the ringing phone.

`I would hate to get on his wrong side,' Jan thought as he cleared his throat and swallowed heavily. "I have a parcel for you. Greta said she has a buyer in France and would arrange the money transfer."

"Fuck, not another child," he replied. "Hope the bitch pays me this time." Jan wondered if he had called Carl a little too early, or maybe he had a hangover, or better still, he was still in bed with a slut he had met the night before. All of that didn't matter now. What was important was that he needed to make arrangements as soon as time was running out.

"So what do you want me to do now?" Jan asked in a slightly sarcastic tone.

"Do you have the little bastard with you now?" Carl asked dryly.

"No, only tomorrow." Jan started to feel agitated at all the questions but realised that this was part of the process, and he needed Carl as a vital link in the chain.

"Then why the fuck are you wasting my time now? Call me when you have the little shit, and I'll tell you what to do next," Carl burst out.

"Okay, okay. I'll call again tomorrow evening." Jan apologised. He instantly disliked this Carl character and replaced the receiver. Who the hell is he, Jan thought, talking to me like that? The phone went dead on the other end.

Jan walked along the beach, heading towards his parents' home, hoping to see the Indian fisherman he met yesterday. He had never had Durban Poison before, and darn, it was good, he thought. He ambled along the beach, in no rush to get home. He wasn't interested in spending time with those two old farts.

As he ambled along, his mind started to race. He could feel the excitement build up inside him, and the last thing he wanted was for his father, who was, after all, an ex-cop, to realise something fishy was going on, so he thought of going home late, once they were asleep. That would mean spending the entire day just hanging around with nothing to do, but that was better than being at home. If he lazed around on the beach, he ran the risk of bumping into his dad whilst he was on one of his utterly pointless fishing expeditions. Jan decided to head back to the mall and find something to do to pass the time. He would remain out of sight for the rest of the day. Jan had not seen the Indian fisherman but decided he would look for him again later.

Jan started to yawn as the effects of the marijuana wore off. His eyes started to become heavy, and he started to nod off.

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I, too, felt the effects of all the emotions of the previous day take their toll, and I felt exhausted. I had been to court and detained, for so long that it felt like forever. I had appeared before a Magistrate who remanded me in custody without bail. I had then experienced a traumatic trip to prison in the back of a secured four-ton truck. From the moment the truck left the magistrate's court, I was threatened and robbed by other inmates. I was made to strip to nothing *en route* to prison. By the time we reached the prison grounds, all the first-time inmates had all their clothes stolen and replaced with unwanted, grubby clothes. Our shoes were the first to go. Whoever wanted the shoes would exchange theirs for ours. Size didn't matter; the style and condition of the shoe did. If shirts and pants fitted someone, they were exchanged. Fortunately, I wore size XXXL, so the inmates weren't too interested in my clothes as my clothes would never fit any of their skinny-arse bodies. Nevertheless, this was my first experience of being robbed and was an experience I would never forget. I think I didn't resist as the day was traumatic and rather overwhelming, but I vowed this would never happen to me again. Next time I would be wiser and beat the crap out of any shithead

that tried to rob me. We decided to sleep in anticipation of another crappy day.

The floor was hard and cold, and the constant sound of guys jabbering or snoring, combined with guys going to the toilet throughout the night, was an experience I would not wish on my worst enemy. If I had two hours of sleep, it was a lot. I had better get used to this quickly, as I had another six nights ahead of me.

Everybody was awake before sunrise, and the hustle and bustle started all over again. Guys spoke loudly and over each other, which was rather annoying. Especially that time of the morning. Breakfast at seven was a piece of bread with a cup of weak black tea. I wondered how I would spend the rest of the day and how I would pass the time.

Then, I remembered Jan's life story and looked forward to the conclusion. This gave me a little enthusiasm to face the day. John and Jan walked around with thick heads for most of the morning and weren't very talkative. We decided to stick together, and the other white boy, who was the youngest of all, finally decided to speak and join in on our conversations. The shock and reality of being arrested and detained had finally become a reality. He just had to come to terms with his detention and deal with it in his own way. Also, having other whites in the same cell came as a relief to him.

"Hi, my name is Chris," he said with an outstretched hand to greet us, but none of us took any notice. He appeared to be a well-spoken, well-mannered young man in his early twenties. I gathered, from his speech, that he had a good upbringing and was probably arrested for a minor offence, maybe driving under the influence of alcohol or possession of weed or something minor like that. He didn't strike me as being a criminal who had been in prison before.

"And what you in for?" I asked, trying to make conversation.

"Shit, you won't believe it, dealing and cross-border trade in wildlife," he said, stuttering as he spoke.

"What the fuck is that," John said from where he was seated.

"Long story," Chris replied, and left it at that.

"And you Peter, what's up with you?" Jan enquired.

"Murder," I replied without elaborating. I was not about to divulge all my secrets to strangers.

"Shit, two murders, and rapist and a murder and wildlife, cross border dude. What a sorry bunch we are," said John sarcastically.

I walked around for a while, wanting to stretch my legs. I walked to the side of the cell and peered through the window, which was higher than a normal window and covered in thick wire mesh and steel burglar guards. Across from the courtyard, was another prison block. This three-storey facility housed sentenced prisoners who were easily identifiable by the bright orange work suits they wore. They were forced to get one hour of exercise a day in a courtyard between the blocks.

I recognised the infamous Cell 16, on the third floor. I recalled how we would take a suspect there for `questioning'. We didn't really ask many questions, as all relevant questions had already been asked at our offices. We needed more details and a proper, detailed confession, and this is where many grown, tough men cried for mercy like babies. No man, no matter how big or how strong, could endure the interrogation that took place in Cell 16. Prison authorities were aware of what happened in there, but they dared not question a member of the Murder and Robbery Unit. Wardens knew the risk of being taken to task by Murder and Robbery detectives if they spoke out about what went on inside this cell, so it was far better just to keep their mouths shut. Not all suspects survived the interrogation either. Sometimes those who were stubborn or reluctant to confess would die during the interrogation, or maybe I should be blunter and call it what it was: torture.

When a suspect died during interrogation, we would simply load the body in the boot of the car and head for Durban. A member of the Murder and Robbery Unit would meet us at Shelly Beach on the South Coast, where a rubber duck was kept. The body would be taken out to sea and dumped behind the shark nets. A concrete block was tied to his neck, and he would never be seen again. We would spend the night in Durban's strip clubs and drink until sunrise at the State's expense. We celebrated our accomplishments.

Later, we would open an escaping-from-custody docket and claim that the suspect managed to escape while out on

investigation. It became so much fun. We were untouchable in the Murder and Robbery Unit, and we had the backing of our commanders. It was only the first suspect I had killed during interrogation that affected me psychologically. Feelings of guilt were soon drowned by alcohol, and the next time, it became easier, and later, it became as easy as having Sunday lunch.

The preferred method of interrogating was the tyre tube. I would jokingly ask a suspect if he would prefer the red or the black tube. I would then suggest the red tube as it was softer on the skin, and the facial treatment one received was better than any beauty spa could offer. The tube would remove all pimples and blackheads in just one ten-minute session.

The suspect would be stripped naked to humiliate and belittle him. This also prevented his clothes from getting soiled. Once he was stripped naked, we would laugh at his manhood and comment on its size in an attempt to insult him. This humiliation would infuriate the suspect, and that's exactly where we wanted him. The suspect's elbows were tied behind his back using an old, soft seat belt. This belt would leave no marks and, therefore, no evidence that he had been tied. The naked suspect was made to lie face down on the floor. He would be told that if he wanted to talk, he must hit his feet on the floor. An experienced detective would sit on his back while the interpreter would sit on his legs. The detective on his back would pull an oval piece of car tyre tube around his face and wrap it around his head to behind his ears.

At first, the hold would last for about ten seconds, then released momentarily, giving the suspect only enough time to take a gasp of air, filling his lungs with air before the tube is again wrapped around his face. The suspect would become light-headed and unable to exhale. Just prior to his fainting, the tube is released, and he exhales. Before he could inhale, the tube would be wrapped around his face again. When the tube is released for a few brief seconds, the suspect would gasp for air, filling his lungs. Before he could exhale, the tube was pulled tightly around his face again, preventing him from exhaling. This would cause his lungs to burn and give him a feeling of dizziness. The tube would be pulled tightly for ten seconds and then released again. This process would be repeated, increasing the time by five seconds every time the tube is wrapped around his head.

By the time there are twenty-second intervals, the suspect starts to lose control of his bladder and bowel, and it becomes quite a mess. This is our indication that the suspect could die if he doesn't confess in the next few minutes, but we had to keep the pressure on. It would infuriate us when they messed, as we would have to clean it if he died. I've never had a strong stomach, so I would usually start gaging and vomiting in the corner of the cell. Very soon, he would start to kick vigorously as an indication that he had had enough, or his body would become limp underneath the detectives. No detective was prepared to resuscitate the dead suspect. The suspect's face was usually sweaty, with vomit around his mouth. Quite a sickening site that nobody wanted to come close to.

An equally effective manner of interrogation was to remove the suspect's pants and tie his hand to the front legs of a chair. His body would be bent forward over the back of the chair, leaving his buttocks exposed. One detective would use a plastic shopping bag as a glove and force a square ice cube in his anus. A seatbelt would be tied around his buttocks and waist to prevent him from pushing it out. The suspect would shout in pain as the ice-cold cube burned inside him as it slowly melted away. If, after five minutes, the suspect had not confessed, another ice cube would be forced into his anus. This process would be repeated until the suspect could not endure the internal pain any longer and would confess.

A confession was very important in the investigation. Not only is it an admission beyond a reasonable doubt, but it was also submitted into evidence during the trial. He would also implicate other co-accused and point out incriminating evidence.

When the admissibility of the confession is examined during a trial within a trial, the suspect would allege that the confession was obtained under duress or against his will, but without any physical evidence, the court would rule in favour of the State, and the confession deemed admissible. I should have feelings of guilt for my inhumane behaviour, but I felt hollow and utterly emotionless.

I thought of the time I was involved in the arrest of Collin Chiliza. After a spate of cash-in-transit heists in KZN, Eastern Gauteng, and Cape Town, Collin Chiliza was identified as the mastermind. Collin Chiliza had served ten years in the South

African Defence Force and had obtained the rank of sergeant. During his time in the Defence Force, he was extensively trained in urban combat, Special Weapons and Training (SWAT) and weapon training. The greedy servicemen soon realised that his meagre salary could not sustain his lavish social habits involving fast cars and women. After building a network of like-minded comrades, within the defence force and outside, he was discharged from the defence force.

In a few short weeks cash in transit robberies spiked and became more violent with every heist. Not only did Collin and his gang force a cash in transit vehicle off the road before forcing its occupants to open the back and remove the cash boxes, but now they started to use commercial and military explosives to blow open the back. All gang members were armed with R4, military issue firearms. They would tie cable ties around the wrists of the occupants, but now they would execute the occupants with a single bullet to the head. Security companies conducted proper and thorough screening of their employees, and dismissed anyone suspected of being a snitch. Other stringent measures were adopted to curb the surge, and even a dye canister was placed in each cash box, resulting in the notes being stained when the cash boxes were forced open, but this, too, was not a deterrent for the brazen gang.

Soon, Collin Chiliza became the most sought criminal in the country. Every police station and unit in the country was placed on high alert, and Collin Chiliza's picture was posted at every charge office. Collin Chiliza was eventually arrested by members of the Brixton Murder and Robbery Unit after a tip off about a CIT robbery in Marblehall. I learned that during his apprehension, which resulted in a gun battle, five gang members were killed, and Collin sustained a gunshot wound to his abdomen. Police recovered a variety of firearms ranging from AK47, R4 and R5, which were stolen from the military stores in Ladysmith.

I recalled when our colleagues from Brixton Murder and Robbery treated us to drinks at Teazers Strip Club. The owner, a notorious underworld gangster, Lolly Jackson, freely supplied drinks and services to members of the Murder and Robbery Unit. One of our colleagues told me that Collin Chiliza was taken out of the police holding cells in Colenso, where he was kept, and unfortunately

on their way to Joburg, he managed to escape. Never to be seen again.

I remained at the window, engulfed in my own thoughts, when I suddenly realised that considerable time had passed and that others might be wondering what I was up to. I looked around the cell and noticed little groups had formed. Each group enjoyed their own conversations. The white guys had gathered near the bathroom door. They were eagerly waiting for Jan to get over his mood and continue with his story. Jan had not gained enough courage to continue with his story, but Chris was eager to tell us about his arrest for wildlife trade. Nobody showed much interest in what he had to say. Stories of murder and rape were far more gruesome and interesting.

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Chris and the S*andawana*

"Guys, you've got to listen to this," Chris said excitedly. "Have any of you ever heard of a *sandawana*?"

"A fucken what?" asked John.

"A *sandawana*. It's a small animal, the size of a field mouse. It could probably fit in the palm of my hand." explained Chris.

Everyone appeared to be confused but remained focused on what he was saying. Never having heard of this thing, I wondered what Chris was going to tell us. We stared at him blankly, waiting for him to continue.

"Ja, so?" Jan asked, wanting to know what this was all about.

"A *sandawana* is a very small and rare animal. Many think it's a myth, much like a *tokolosh*. Some have claimed to have it, but that's usually bullshit.

One of the black inmates, who was probably in his sixties, got up from his group and came over to join us. Obviously, he had heard the word "*sandawana*," and this provoked his interest.

When he reached us, he said; "Gents," and smiled at us. He sat down without introducing himself. "Carry on," he said to Chris with some interest.

"As I was saying, this is a very small wild animal. It lives off poisonous leaves and berries, and as it walks, it leaves a trail of blood. The superstition or belief is that this animal has

supernatural powers that can bring great fortune. If treated incorrectly and if the proper rituals are not followed, it can bring extreme bad luck, even death or the death of your children."

"Oh, you talking Shit, said John. "I don't believe in that superstitious bullshit."

"It's very real," Chris replied, hoping to continue with his story.

"Ja, it's true," said the elderly black guy. "In our culture, a *sandawana* is very dangerous. If a woman has anything to do with it, or even knows of its existence or whereabouts, she will bleed to death. Before dying, she will urinate every about ten minutes until she is completely dehydrated. She could also lose a child a year. When all her children have died, all her immediate family will die also."

"I once heard of a guy that went to Zimbabwe to fetch one of these animals. They can only be transported in a diesel vehicle; otherwise, they will die in transit, and the driver will have an accident and will also die. This guy bought a brand-new diesel Toyota and fetched this animal in Zimbabwe, for which he paid one hundred thousand rand. Whilst travelling back, the vehicle started to jerk and couldn't reach a speed of one hundred kilometres per hour. He stopped and revved the vehicle, trying to increase its power before continuing on his journey. Not long thereafter, the vehicle started to jerk again. After a while, he became angry at his new vehicle's poor performance and realised that this must have to do with the animal and its powers. He was angry and decided to spray the animal, which was kept in a small shoebox with Doom, and kill it. He emptied the entire can of doom into the shoe box where the animal was held captive, and it wasn't long before the animal died. He started his vehicle and continued on his journey. After travelling only a few kilometres, the animal suddenly came alive again. The driver suddenly developed a severe headache and started to bleed from the nose, ears and mouth. He stopped the vehicle, and as he exited his vehicle, he collapsed and died. So this animal and its powers are very real. You better believe it," said the black guy, who appeared to be enjoying this conversation, as he could relate to what was being told.

"Sounds like a load of shit," said John, not wanting to totally dismiss what he had been told.

”A cousin of mine,” said the black guy, “heard that if you own a *sandawana*, or its skin or even its hair, you keep it in your wallet, and your wallet will never be empty. He travelled to Botswana to meet with a local *angora* (witch doctor) who would sell him some *sandawana* hair. On his arrival in Gaborone, he met this *angora* at the pre-arranged taxi rank. The *angora* wanted to clean him before they negotiated the sale, so he was instructed to sleep in the bush for three days. He was not permitted to eat meat and had to live on maize and vegetables only. He was also not permitted to have sex during that time. Only then would he be considered cleansed, and could return to the village. He continued to explain that after three days, his cousin returned to the village and met with the *angora*. The *angora* accompanied him into the bush where they came across a secret hiding place. Before nearing this secret place his cousin was told to remove all his clothes, including his shoes. Slowly, they walked side by side toward a hole in the ground. Suddenly, a young boy appeared from a nearby bush. His cousin was told that this was a shepherd boy who lived and guarded the animal. The *angora* introduced the shepherd boy as being the handler. The shepherd boy walked toward the hole first, followed by the *angora* and his cousin. He stealthily approached a large hole in the ground, about one and a half meters in diameter. An old car tyre had been placed inside the hole to provide the animal with some form of shelter.

As he peered into the dark hole, it took his eyes a few moments to adjust to the darkness. He looked inside the hole, hoping to catch a glimpse of the animal, but couldn’t see anything. The shepherd just smiled at the illusiveness of this little animal. The *angora* wanted to exhibit the magical powers of this animal, so he removed a money note from his pocket and handed it to the shepherd boy. The boy accepted the note with both hands and bent his knees slightly as a gesture of respect. He knew exactly what to do with the money. He took the note and held it near the entrance of the hole.

Miraculously, the little animal appeared in the light. He noticed it was light brown with a white “V” at the base of its neck. Its coarse hair overlapped itself on its tiny body. He stared in amazement at how the little animal was attracted to the money. The shepherd boy placed the note on the animal's back, and he noticed how the money became magnetised to the little body.

"You see the magical powers," the *angora* said at last. The cousin remained speechless and only nodded his head. "Look, I'll show you more," he said. He instructed the young boy to run back to his village and fetch a glass of milk, a glass of water and a raw egg. The young boy nodded and ran off into the distance.

After about an hour, the young boy returned with the water, milk and egg, as requested. The *angora* removed a pocket knife from his pocket and instructed the young boy to cut a few hairs from the back of the animal. The young boy took the knife and did as he was told. A few moments later, he handed his master the knife and a few strands of hair. The *angora* instructed the visitor to pay attention and look closely at the glass of milk. He removed a few individual hairs from the tuft of hair and placed them into the glass of milk. Instantly, the milk turned thick and sour. He then placed the remaining hair into a glass of water. Instantly, the individual strands of hair separated and were drawn to the sides of the glass.

The cousin stood in amazement as he observed the demonstration. "Now for the last test. Then I'm sure you'll believe this is true," said the master. He handed the raw egg to the young boy, who needed no instruction. He knelt in front of the hole and placed the egg on the ground, next to the animal. Within seconds and without being touched, the egg cracked. The cousin was lost for words. He just stood there with his mouth wide open in amazement. The *angora* thanked the young shepherd boy and suggested that the cousin had seen enough for one day, and that it was time for them to leave.

Back at the home of the *angora*, the cousin paid the required fifty thousand rand and was handed a neatly wrapped parcel which contained *sandawana* hair. The *angora* told him that his wallet would never be empty, provided he followed the rituals and beliefs which go with owning the powers of a *sandawana*.

Smiling from ear to ear, the cousin left the home of the *angora*, believing that his days of hardship were finally over. When he arrived home, he ushered his wife into the bedroom, where he excitedly explained in detail to her what he had experienced. The cousin didn't live in an elaborate house. He lived in a township in a modest home consisting of an open-plan lounge, which also served as a bedroom for his two daughters

and his mother. He and his wife occupied the only bedroom in the house. The small kitchen was adjacent to the lounge. They were not fortunate enough to have an indoor toilet but shared an outside toilet with their neighbour.

The old man explained that life had improved and that his cousin was living well after receiving the *sandawana* powers. Never again did his family go to sleep hungry. There was always enough. He managed to buy his wife and daughters cell phones and gifts, and he always had money in his wallet. He even bought his mother-in-law new clothes, and he was able to give her taxi money to visit a government hospital and not a local clinic.

Unfortunately, for his wife, it was never enough. She wanted a new house and a new car and became greedy. His daughters were also soon not satisfied with the new cell phones; they wanted tablets, and soon, they, too, became greedy. Life was good, and his cousin was happy that he could provide very well.

The old man continued that on a day in December, his wife took his wallet, without his knowledge and went shopping. She bought a lot of shit that they really didn't need. That night, while they were asleep, they were awakened by a loud noise. His wife, being younger than him, managed to jump out of bed first, and she ran to the lounge where her daughters and mother-in-law lay sleeping. As she ran into the lounge, the roof suddenly collapsed. Within moments, the walls started to cave in, leaving only the walls of the bedroom where the cousin was standing.

By the time the cousin managed to get out of bed, it was too late. His wife, daughters and mother were covered in debris. The dust was so thick in the air that any attempts to rescue them were just impossible. "This is the power of a *sandawana*," the old man explained.

"You can make so much money from its powers, but you might not have enough life to enjoy it all."

"That's fucked up," said John. "What's the point of having so much money and not being able to spend it? Get it blow it, isn't that how life goes? There's plenty more where it comes from, and there are many ways to kill a cat." He said with a smirk on his face.

I had a buyer who was prepared to pay two hundred million rand for a live s*andawana* and fifty million for a skin. I

started to search high and low for this animal, but soon realised that they are not indigenous to this country.

After a lot of research, I established that these little creatures can only be found in northern Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania. In my search for this animal, I met people who had been looking for it for many years and had come up empty. Some have sold everything they have to find it and have lost their homes and their families in the process. Others spent thousands of rand travelling to neighbouring countries in search of it and came back empty-handed.

Remember, this animal is demonic. It can bring you great fortune, if treated right, but great misery if you don't. I have never seen one because I'm not clean, so I have a guy who helps me with the testing of its powers.

One day, we heard of an active skin in a township to the east of Joburg. We were led to the house by a friend of the guy who possessed the skin. On our arrival at the house, the guy with me went inside the house to check the power of the skin, while I remained in the vehicle. He later came out of the house and told me that the skin was in a bicycle tube, and the tube was knotted at each end. The skin was removed carefully from the tube. He explained that the hair on the skin lay crisscrossed, and when the skin was removed from the tube, the hairs suddenly came alive and started to move. He placed a fifty rand note on the skin, and it immediately magnetised the note. He is convinced that the skin had passed the money test and that we would be able to sell it.

We promised to make the necessary arrangements with the buyer and would return the following morning to process the deal. The following morning, the test was performed on the skin again, and it had no power. The hairs didn't come alive when the skin was removed from the tube, nor did the skin magnetise the money. The guy who had the skin told us that the owner was in Malawi and that he had contacted him telephonically and told him about the potential sale. He became very angry that the skin could be sold so cheaply, so he withdrew its powers from where he was in Malawi.

The older black guy was visibly agitated by John's remarks, so he helped himself off the floor and stood up.

He turned to John before leaving and said; “You know nothing. This is black magic, baba! If you’ve got the right doctor, he can blast with it. You don’t know blasting, I know. The doctor can put the *sandawana* in a room and do a ritual, and then, just like lightning, the whole room will be full of money, it's real, baba. The Indians, Chinese and some Presidents in Africa do it. I heard that Indians put *mutie* (a powerful medicine) on the bridge at the border, so when it’s bought it’s brought into this country, it loses its power. They are jealous and don’t want others to have as much money as they do. It’s all about the spiritual and demonic powers of this animal. This is very real and dangerous, baba. Don’t play with that thing.”

We searched high and low for this elusive little animal. It could make us a fortune, and we remained persistent in our search. Then, one day, a man contacted me and told me that he had travelled to northern Mozambique and had found one and was looking for a buyer. He had transported it in his diesel vehicle, and it was alive and available for sale. We contacted the buyer, who told us where to wait for her agent, who would test the animal, and if it had all its powers, we should follow him to her office, where she would do an electronic transfer into each of our bank accounts. We parked in the shade at the prearranged rendezvous and waited. The owner sat in his diesel double cab, and my guy and I sat in my vehicle. Near us sat a lady vendor selling sweets and loose cigarettes on a cardboard box. She was totally unaware of who we were and what we were doing there. After about an hour, a black guy arrived driving a black AMG Merc. When he opened his vehicle door, we noticed that he was immaculately dressed in a grey pinned striped suit with a black shirt and black tie. Without introducing himself, he told us that he worked for the client and that she has asked him to check on the animal, to not only verify it was the right thing but also to confirm that it possessed all its powers.

The owner climbed out of his double cab and opened the hard top cover of the bin. A plastic box contained a smaller cooler box, which housed the animal. As soon as he opened the box, a seven-ton truck, travelling on a straight road in front of us, suddenly overturned and caught alight. The three occupants scrambled out of the truck through a side window that was now facing upwards before the truck suddenly caught alight. The

woman selling sweets and cigarettes suddenly collapsed to the ground, and she started shouting and screaming in agony, holding her abdomen with both hands. She was bleeding profusely, and her skirt was covered in blood. The agent got such a fright that he ran to his car and hurriedly sped off without saying a word.

The surrounding area suddenly became chaotic. The truck caught alight and there was smoke everywhere. Within minutes, police, ambulance, and the fire brigade arrived. The owner realised that this animal was demonic, and he had to dispose of it by piercing a toothpick through its heart after midnight. This was the ritual for disposing of an evil animal that caused so much destruction. He, too, sped off before it caused any more damage.

Also, this money must be shared equally between everybody involved, and one beneficiary cannot give his wife, or any other person, any of that money as a gift, as it is believed to bring bad fortune. The only way in which the wife can benefit from the money is if he electronically transfers it into her bank account. Also, two males from the same family cannot benefit from the sale of the same animal, and this animal can only be sold once, or it will bring terrible luck to the buyer and seller; it's a bit like cracking an egg. It can only be cracked once.

Chris continued to explain that finding a *sandawana* and facilitating the sale could mean the end of his financial woes and set him up for life. He became so obsessed with finding this animal that he thought about it all the time. Eventually, he had spent all his savings and all his spare time trying to put a deal together. He knew that he just needed to facilitate one deal to have financial freedom for life. He had run out of money but maintained that he was close and a deal was imminent. He sold his furniture in order to fund the venture, just as others before him had done.

The seller, who had previously brought him an active *sandawana*, telephoned him and told him that he was going back to Mozambique to look for another *sandawana*. He was adamant that this time, he would come back with the right one, one that didn't cause mayhem like the previous animal had done. Chris was overjoyed by the news and made the necessary arrangements with the buyer. Another *sandawana* would be

available in about two or three weeks. It was being fetched from northern Mozambique.

A month later, Chris received a phone call from his contact. He told Chris that he had found a female animal and that he should be back in Joburg by the end of that week. Chris was over the moon with excitement. He immediately contacted the buyer, and she told him to contact her again when it arrived. The next four days seemed to take forever.

Towards the end of the week, Chris received a call from his contact saying that he was about two hours away from Joburg and wanted to know where they could meet. Chris promptly contacted the buyer, who gave him the rendezvous in Midrand, and told him to contact her once the animal had arrived. Chris relayed this information to his contact and made his way to Midrand. He waited there until his contact arrived. Immediately, Chris contacted the buyer, and she told him to wait there as she would be sending another agent to do the verification. Chris was overjoyed. He could not contain his excitement and felt his heart pound in his chest. The deal that he had been working on for so long was finally coming to fruition, and soon he would be very, very rich. He could not sit in his car and wait as the excitement was too great, so he paced around the parking area, smoking one cigarette after the other.

The agent arrived a while later, driving the latest Mercedes sports model in silver-grey. As he walked over to Chris's contact without introducing himself, the contact opened the back of his diesel van, which he had done before. Chris looked around, expecting something drastic to happen, but everything remained normal. The agent removed a two hundred rand note from his wallet and placed it on the animal's back. The terrified animal jumped around inside the cooler box, looking for a way to escape, but was unsuccessful. He placed the note on the animal's back, and the note was magnetised. The agent only performed the money test, as he knew the buyer wanted the animal to generate huge wealth. He also could see that this was the real deal and not a hamster or rat. Other tests can be done on the animal, but the agent told the contact that the money test, which the animal had passed, was sufficient for him to give his employer positive feedback.

Shortly thereafter, Chris received a call from the buyer, who sounded very pleased. She told Chris that he should follow her agent to her office, where she would make an electronic transfer into his and his contact's accounts. Chris's heart started pounding even harder with excitement. Soon the deal would be concluded. He instructed his contact to follow him as they were going to the buyer. The three vehicles drove into Johannesburg, where they parked in the undercover parking. They followed the agent into the building to meet the buyer. The three men climbed into the elevator and went to the ninth floor, where the doors automatically opened for them. They walked past a friendly receptionist, who smiled politely, and they followed the agent down the passage until they reached a frosted glass door. The agent knocked twice before entering and holding the door open, whilst Chris and his contact entered the lavishly furnished, air-conditioned office. The buyer, who sat behind her oversized oak table, was in her mid-fifties. An attractive blond lady who was well dressed in a plain cream-coloured suit. She was very formal when she spoke and rushed her sentences as if she didn't have time for pleasantries and wanted to get down to business. She swivelled her chair away from her computer, turned to her agent, and said, "Albert, I believe you've seen and tested the merchandise. Is that correct?"

"Yes, that is correct, Mrs Peterson," Albert replied, holding his hand in front of him as he spoke.

"Thank you. Make sure that the merchandise is taken to my residence within the hour. I will arrange for Mohamed to meet you there. Thank you. You may be excused," she said.

"Gentlemen, please take a seat. Please provide me with your banking details. She slid a notepad and pen across her table towards us, and swivelled her chair around to face her computer again. We recorded the information and politely pushed the notepad and pen back to her. She turned to retrieve the notepad, and within minutes, I received a payment notification of one hundred and twenty-five million rand. Chris explained that he almost fainted in his chair when he read the text message. Suddenly, he developed a cracking headache, and his mouth was dry. He found it difficult to speak, but he nervously stood up from his chair, stretched out his hand, and shook hers. "Thank you."

He said beneath his breath, thinking he should keep the conversation to a bare minimum.

"No, I thank you," she replied as she shook hands.

A week later, Chris bought a new BMW 450i and new clothes to match his new car. New furniture for his house and for his little garden, and he was relaxing on the couch, watching sport on his brand new, high-definition flat-screen TV, with a bottle of single malt whiskey, when he heard a knock at the door. He took another sip of his single malt whiskey and went to the door. He hated being interrupted while watching sports, but having a friend over to help finish the whiskey might not have been such a bad idea.

When he opened it, he found two men, both dressed in suits, standing in front of his door. "Good morning, Sir. I'm Inspector Davids, and this is my colleague, Inspector Jansen. We are from SARS. May we come in?" he asked.

Chris felt his flesh turn to goosebumps and all the blood drain from his face, but he knew that he had to keep his cool. "Yes, sure, please come in."

"I held the door open for them and showed them the way to the lounge," Chris explained. "We proceeded to my lounge, where they sat on two single chairs. I offered them a drink, but they declined.

"We noticed that a large deposit was made into your bank account on the fifth of this month. Can you explain the source of this deposit and what it was for, please?" Inspector Jansens asked, sitting on the edge of his chair and staring at Chris.

Chris thought for a moment but realised that there was no way he could explain such a large amount, except for telling the truth.

"I sold a *sandawana*," is all Chris could say.

"So this is revenue generated from the sale of a?" and he paused, thinking of the name I had just used.

"Yes, a *sandawana*," I interrupted.

"Sir, you are aware that this form of income is taxable? And a *sandawana* - what is that anyway?" he inquired.

I was not in the mood to go through the entire explanation, so I just replied, "It's an animal."

"A wild animal, you mean?" He asked, and I just nodded my head while looking down at my new carpet. "Do you have a licence to trade in wild animals, Sir? And you did know, I'm sure, that cross-border trading in wild animals is a criminal offence." He explained.

I just shook my head. "Well, Sir, we are going to take you into custody for trading in wild animals without a licence. We have already frozen your bank account, as these funds are considered to be the proceeds of crime. The Asset Forfeiture Unit will also be attaching your assets purchased with these illegal funds."

Chris was arrested and taken to the police station, where he was charged with dealing in wild animals without a licence and tax evasion. He appeared in court on the same day, and the case against him was remanded for a period of seven days for a bail application. Chris was remanded in custody to the prison.

*

Soon it would be lunch, and I wondered what shit they were dishing up for us today. I heard the trolley being pushed down the corridor towards our cell. The inmates got up from their groups and started heading towards the cell door. There was no order, and everyone just grabbed a plate of food as they were being pushed into the cell from under the security door. The younger guys grabbed first with total disregard towards the older inmates. This was survival, and they feared they might lose out. There was no order in here, and it was each man for himself. If you managed to get a plate of food, you would eat. If not, you would go hungry; that was the basic law of survival. As I snatched my plate of food, I noticed a pile of starchy samp and beans on my plate. I was not very interested in this sloppy mess but was quite hungry, so I took my plate to place at the back of the cell. I noticed that we were not provided with any eating utensils and were forced to eat with our hands. I managed to eat most of it, swallowing every mouthful several times to get it down my throat. Everyone sat in silence, which I quite enjoyed. Most of the inmates appeared to be enjoying their meal. It then occurred to me that this meal was part of their staple diet, and I was sure that this meal was better than what some of them were used to.

After lunch, we returned our plates to the front door, which were later collected by the kitchen staff. I walked around

for a while, not really wanting to interact with other inmates but rather to stretch my legs and get some exercise. I dared not remove my box of smokes in front of these inmates as I was sure they were all desperate for a cigarette and would do just about anything to get their hands on one.

I ambled slowly to my place and, without drawing any attention, managed to remove a cigarette from its box. I lit it and thoroughly enjoyed the acrid taste as I exhaled the smoke slowly through my nose.

Jan soon joined me. He stared at me with his ice-blue eyes, and I knew what he was after. I obliged and handed him my cigarette. He took a drag and deeply inhaled the smoke, which made him cough slightly. We shared the cigarette, and before we could finish it, John and Chris joined us. They stood around aimlessly for a while, waiting for the blood to flow through their veins, before taking a seat on the cold concrete floor near us.

Chris was eager to continue with his story, but John objected, saying, “Come on, Jan. Tell us what happened to your kid.”

Jan sat back, trying to recall where he had stopped and the events that had taken place thereafter. After a few moments of thought, it started coming back to him.

“Oh yes. With Michael, you mean?”

“Ja and that German dude.”

“Oh yes, Carl Schmidt. Shit, guys, what a fuckup. I fucken nearly died. Okay, so I needed a drink after my telephone call, so I headed back to the mall. I was sure I would find a pub there. As I entered the mall, on the right, I saw a sign that read `Dennis’s Pub and Restaurant.’

“Brilliant! I thought as I walked into the pub. It had just opened, and I was the first patron there. It was quite dark inside, but the Indian barman seemed to lighten it up with his charisma. He was quite a cheerful chap, probably in his late sixties.

“Looks like you need a drink, young man,” he said with a broad smile on his face, displaying a gold front tooth.”

“Yes, more than one.”

“Double whiskey on the rocks is the cheapest.”

“Thanks.” I stood at the counter whilst waiting for my drink and looked around this establishment. I was sure this must have

been a popular watering hole in its day. The furniture and décor were outdated but were quite pleasant. The bar counter was made of solid wood, and the top was highly polished. The bar stools were also made of solid wood, but the seats needed re-upholstering. The material was worn around the edges, and the foam was almost non-existent.

The view from the bar was probably one of its main attractions. It looked onto the parking lot with the sea in the distance. Quite convenient, as one could sit there and watch people entering the mall and the pub. The pictures on the wall were from the seventies. They were mainly of old sports cars and girls in their one-piece bathing suits, as this was fashionable in those days. These old pictures were faded and rather tatty but it all added to the character of the place.

The barman returned with my drink and shifted a coaster closer to me before placing the ice-cold glass on it in front of me.

"Thanks," I said in return. As I sat gazing out the window at the sea in the distance, I noticed a dark blue BMW Seven series pull into a parking lot. Two well-dressed Indian men alighted from the vehicle. They walked towards the entrance of the mall, confidently looking from side to side.

As I took a sip of my whiskey, the two men entered the pub and greeted the barman. One was visibly older than the other, with greying hair and a grey beard. He wore a thick gold chain around his neck and his right wrist. I was convinced that he wore a gold Rolex watch on his left wrist, but never got close enough to have a good look. The tailored Chino's with matching button-up shirt and brown leather shoes made him look very distinguished and very wealthy. I was sure he was a business owner who stayed in a very upmarket northern suburb with a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree sea view.

As the two men entered the pub, they walked straight to a table near the corner. The more senior of the two faced the door, whilst the other faced the parking lot. The pub was not large enough for me not to hear what they were saying, and I made a point of it not to eavesdrop or look in their direction so as not to draw any attention to myself. The barman walked around the bar, which took up the entire width of the pub and walked briskly towards the two new patrons.

"Good morning, Mr Naidoo," he said politely with a friendly smile. "The usual for you, Sir?" he inquired. "And the same for the other gentleman, I assume?"

"Yes, thanks, Charles," was his reply before the barman turned around and hurried back behind the bar counter.

"Mr Naidoo, Denesh called me and told me that he has guys on the inside. He said that he could supply us with as much red wine as we needed. He is dealing with the security issue but is convinced that for a few hundred thousand, he can get them on his side. When would you want the first consignment?" he enquired from the most senior man.

"What about a runner? We need it delivered to the Arabs in Joburg before next weekend," said the senior Indian with a tone of authority in his voice.

"I'm trying to convince my cousin, Bobby, but so far, he doesn't seem interested. I told him what you are offering for a trip, but he says it's too risky. Maybe I'll still work on him, and he'll agree, but I can't guarantee anything at this stage. He is young and says the risks are too high."

"We're running out of time. I'm under pressure to deliver, or the Arabs might find another supplier."

"I realise that, sir; I just need more time."

Charles, the barman, arrived with two glasses of Pontiac and placed them in front of the patrons. "Thanks, Charles," he said, turning around and coming back to serve me another drink.

The two gentlemen continued to discuss other business issues, such as the import of textiles, but that did not raise my interest.

"So we will meet here again tomorrow. You better have some good news about Bobby. I need a runner urgently." The two businessmen gulped their drinks in a hurry and stood up from the table. As they walked out, I noticed the main guy toss a two hundred rand note on the bar counter. "Thanks, Charles. Keep the change," and they left. I watched them walk to the BMW and suddenly speed off, making a noise on the tar surface, as the tyres skidded forward.

I stayed in the pub for most of the day as I was reluctant to see my parents. I just made small talk with Charles who proudly told me that he has been working in this pub for the last forty

years. He told me about all the changes he had witnessed over the years and so on.

As evening fell, the pub started to fill up. Most patrons, I noticed, had popped in for a drink after work, and Charles greeted each one of them by name. Most only stayed for a drink or two and chatted to each other about work or their wives.

I decided that I had had enough to drink and that it was time to go home whilst I still could. It was dark, and my mother would be worried, as she always is when it gets late, and she doesn't know where I am. I needed an early night's sleep anyway, and it was a big day tomorrow, and Michael was catching the overnight bus. After catching a taxi, he should be here around eight o'clock.

I stumbled home. Fortunately, it wasn't too far. I dreaded having a confrontation with my father, especially after I had a few drinks. These confrontations usually turned out to be for the worst, and we would not speak for days. My poor mother was always caught in the middle and was usually the peacemaker.

When I arrived home, I noticed my dad would sit in front of the television set, watching the news. He glared at me and said; "You're late."

At the sound of hearing the front door, my mother exited the kitchen smiling. "Your dinner is in the microwave, my boy. Did you enjoy your day? What did you do all day?" she enquired politely without wanting to interrogate me.

"Can't you see he's been drinking? He thinks he's on a bloody holiday," my dad snarled.

"Thanks, Mom, I'll eat in my room. I need an early night as Michael will be here quite early tomorrow morning". I walked to the kitchen, took my dinner from the microwave, said goodnight, and went to my room.

After dinner, I lay in bed thinking about the following day. I wondered how it would all pan out and if this Carl character could pull it off without getting caught.

Jan fell asleep thinking about his conversation with Carl Schmidt earlier that day, and he also thought about Sarie. The fucken bitch, he thought as he ground his teeth together. I'll show her. If I can't have him, then neither can she.

The following morning, my alarm clock woke me at six o'clock. I had a shave and a shower and dressed in my best open-

neck shirt and matching trousers. As I entered the kitchen, I saw my dad standing at the kettle. He was preparing coffee for himself and my mother.

As I walked in, he said, “What’s wrong with you? You can’t go looking for a job at this time of the morning.”

“No, Dad, Michael is coming today, remember?”

“Any excuse not to look for a job.” He sneered.

”How long are you staying here anyway?” he asked while taking a sip of his coffee.

“Not long, Dad. I think I might have a repping job. I’ll travel to Joburg once a week. The perks seem quite good. I get a company car, salary with commission,” I said excitedly.

“Selling what, ladies' underwear?” he asked sarcastically.

“No, Dad, red wine,” I said confidently.

“Crap, man,” he said sternly. “You can’t sell red wine from Durban in Joburg. Don’t let them bullshit you.”

I had learnt while I was in prison that red wine was the term used for red mercury, but he didn’t need to know that. I just ignored him and walked towards the kettle.

It was around a quarter past eight when I heard a vehicle pull up in front of the house. My mother, who had been waiting, excitedly opened the front door and rushed out. Out of the taxi climbed a handsome young man. He had his father’s blond hair and blue eyes and his mother’s features. I noticed as he walked up the stairs towards the house, that he was quite tall for his age.

My mother ran towards him, flung her arms around him, and kissed him on the cheek. He smiled at us sheepishly as he greeted us. My father stretched out his right hand and said, “Hello, son. Hope you had a safe trip.”

“Yes, thanks, Granddad, it was okay.”

I hugged him and took his bag from him. “We’ll share a room,” I said as I turned around and headed for the bedroom.

After a while, I told him to tell his gran and grandpa all his news, as I quickly needed to walk to the nearby shop to buy a box of cigarettes. I left the three chatting and headed to the local mall. I hoped that I wasn’t too early for Carl Schmidt.

I rushed out of the house with my diary in my back pocket. “I won’t be long,” I said.

I arrived at the telephone booth and removed the dairy from my back pocket. My hands started to tremble as I paged through the diary for Carl Schmidt's number. I could feel beads of sweat form on my brow, but I convinced myself that this was from the early morning humidity. I steadied my hand and took a deep breath. As I dialled his number, I could feel my heart pounding in my chest. This is it, I thought to myself. The time of reckoning had finally come, and now there was no turning back. This is what I had planned and had been looking forward to for so long now.

The phone rang a few times before I heard Carl's voice on the other end "Yes?" he asked in his thick German accent.

"Morning, it's Jan speaking," I said in reply.

"Oh yes, Jan," he said, "We spoke yesterday, Ja."

"Yes, yes we did," I replied whilst clearing my throat. "Do you have the boy now?" he enquired, to which I replied; "Yes, yes I do."

"Very good. Meet me at the wharf at midday today. I will be in the smoking section of the `Catfish Pub and Grill'. Bring the boy with you," and he abruptly replaced the receiver before I could reply. I now had a lot of time to waste. As I walked home, I devised a plan, a very good plan at that.

When I entered the house, my parents and Michael were seated around the dining table and having breakfast.

"Would you like breakfast, my boy? I've made scrambled eggs on toast. There is more than enough for you in the pan," she said.

"No thanks. It's way too early to eat. I'll just have a cup of coffee," I said, trying my best not to show any signs of nerves or excitement. I made a cup of coffee and went to the veranda where I could smoke, leaving the three of them chatting at the table.

I didn't have much time if I wanted to meet Mr Naidoo, I thought, so I drank my coffee quickly and went back inside.

"Come, my boy. Today we're going to spend some time together. I'm going to take you for a milkshake, and then we'll go to the beach. How would you like that? We haven't spent alone time in a long time, and I think it's time for us to catch up on what's been going on in your life. Do you have a girlfriend yet?"

A visible change came over Michael when his father spoke to him. He started to stutter and became nervous. He constantly looked down and couldn't look his father in the eyes when spoken to. He would become flushed, and sweat beads would form above his upper lip and forehead.

Before Michael could answer, Jan grabbed him by the arm and said; "Come, we're going to have fun. I'll even get you your favourite chocolate dip ice cream."

Reluctantly, Michael rose from the dinner table.

"Go, you're going to have fun bonding with your father; you two need time together," my mother said encouragingly.

Jan and Michael left the home, with Jan's arm around Michael's shoulders.

"See you two handsome boys later," Jan's mother said as they walked out of the house. "He's such a good father," she said to her husband, who was chewing on a slice of toast.

Jan and Michael walked towards the mall. "I'm taking you for a milkshake at the mall. I need to see some businessman there. I hope to get a job soon, and we can start a new life here in Durban. Doesn't that sound great, hey?" Jan said in a high-pitched, excited tone.

"What about my mommy?" Michael asked with a tear in his eye.

"Maybe your mom will also move here, and we can all start a new life together," Jan said, trying to get his son to agree. "Okay then. We'll just see how it goes, Okay?" Michael sniffed and used the back of his hand to wipe his nose.

When they arrived at Dennis's Pub, they met Charles with his usual friendly smile. "Good morning, young fella. This must be your son. He looks a lot like you," Charles said, trying to make conversation.

"Yes, he is, thanks. Whiskey, double shot and a chocolate milkshake, thanks," Jan said whilst helping Michael onto the high bar stool.

Jan surveyed the room, particularly the table where Mr Naidoo and his associate had sat the day before. He hoped they would already be there but realised it was still early. Once again, he was the first patron to arrive at the pub.

Charles brought the double whiskey with ice and the chocolate milkshake and placed it in front of them. Michael drank the milkshake with great pleasure. A milkshake moustache formed on his upper lip, which made him laugh. He giggled loudly as he licked the ice cream from his upper lip. Jan drank his whiskey leisurely as he still needed to wait three hours until midday.

At exactly ten o'clock, just like the previous day, the blue BMW arrived and parked in front of the mall entrance. Mr Naidoo exited the vehicle and walked into the mall, followed by his associate. Smartly dressed, as usual, he entered Dennis's Pub, and they walked straight to the table they had occupied the previous day. Charles moved from behind the counter and walked over to them to serve them.

"Good morning, Mr Naidoo," Charles said as he approached their table.

"Charles," Mr Naidoo acknowledged.

"The usual?" Charles asked a visibly irritated Mr Naidoo. "Yes, of course," he said, "and with a dash of speed. I'm in a hurry."

"Yes, of course, Mr Naidoo," Charles replied as he turned his back on them and headed quickly back to the bar counter.

"So what's the story, Bobby?" Mr Naidoo asked his associate.

"Well, it's like this, Mr Naidoo. I did talk to Jimmy, my cousin, again, but now his wife says no. I was this close." Bobby raised his hand and held up two fingers as an indication as to how close he was.

"Bobby, listen to me, and listen very carefully. I don't employ you to almost get it right. I pay you big bucks to get it right. If I lose this deal because you fucked up, your head will be on the chopping block. Right! Now make work of it. Today is Monday. I'll give you until tomorrow to find me a fucken runner."

Charles arrived with two glasses of Pontiac and placed them on the table in front of them. Mr Naidoo pushed his drink aside and stood up, followed by a visibly shaken Bobby.

Jan realised that this would probably not be the ideal time to talk to Mr Naidoo and that he would come back tomorrow in an attempt to speak with him. Mr Naidoo hurried out of the

building, followed by his associate. They were gone as quickly as they had arrived.

Jan gulped down the last of his whiskey and removed money from his pocket to pay the bill. He encouraged Michael to finish up as they had things to do.

"Thanks, Charles," Jan said and emphasised that they were going to spend the day on the beach.

Jan and Michael exited the building and strolled towards the beach. While walking across the parking area, Jan asked Michael if he would like to go and see the boats. This would be exciting as they could sit and have a cold drink whilst watching the big ocean liners enter and leave the harbour, and Michael could feed the seagulls.

This sounded like fun, and Michael agreed. They made their way to the beach and sat on a bench, watching the waves until Michael became bored. He started to build sand castles and played in the sand whilst Jan kept a close eye.

At eleven thirty, Jan told Michael that he wanted to show him the big ships at the harbour. This was going to be so much fun, but they would need to catch a taxi to get into the city.

Michael's face lit up with excitement at the thought of doing something with his dad. Michael and Jan caught a taxi to the wharf. There was great excitement as Michael had never been to the harbour before. He was excited to watch the big ships enter and exit the harbour and watch them from close up. The sound of the crashing waves excited him, and he stared in amazement at how such a small tugboat could pull a huge ship. There was a cool chill in the sea breeze, but this was fun, and neither of them noticed the chill.

As it neared midday, Jan said; "You must be hungry. Let's get something to eat at the wharf. I'm sure you feel like a cheeseburger and chips. What do you think of that?" Michael nodded his head in agreement, smiling up at his dad.

Michael and Jan walked around the wharf admiring the yachts that were docked in the harbour. Michael particularly liked the big ones and admired the shape of the catamarans. They laughed at the names of the different yachts as they walked hand in hand. This was so much fun, and Michael didn't realise that Jan had other things on his mind. Jan started to pick up the pace as he had to find the Catfish Restaurant, and it was nearing midday.

While walking on the wooden walkways, Jan spotted the restaurant in the distance. “Come quickly; I know a restaurant that makes the best double cheeseburgers in the country, and the chips are made just the way you like them,” Jan said to Michael, grabbing him by the arm.

Michael increased his pace in excitement, and they hurried towards the restaurant. On entering the restaurant, Michael couldn’t take his eyes off the massive fish displayed on the walls. There were funny-looking fish with sharp arrows coming out of their nose. Other, funny-looking fish had so many legs. Some fish were covered with sharp, spiky things. Some were round and looked like a ball. Michael smiled at the funny faces that some of them had. There was also a display of nets, rods, bells and rings that were painted red and white. This place was so cool, he thought. It reminded him of a ship cabin he had once seen in a movie about pirates. He couldn’t wait to tell his friends at school, but none of them would believe him.

They walked towards the back of the restaurant, found a table, and sat down. Soon, a pretty petite blond, about twenty years old, came to them. She wore a very short skirt with a little red and black apron. Michael wondered if she was the captain’s daughter. He also wondered what it must be like to be the captain of a big ship, and to sail across the seas, and visit other countries, and to have your own waiter.

“Double burger and chips and a double whiskey with ice, thanks,” said Jan, as his eyes scouted the restaurant for anyone who might look like Carl Schmidt. He had no idea what he looked like or what he was wearing. He only had an image in his mind, but that could be deceiving.

The cute waitress returned to their table with their order and placed it down on the table in front of them. She smiled and returned to the entrance where she stood and greeted patrons entering the restaurant. Michael wasted no time in eating his burger. He ate the burger and the chips by hand, and it was evident that he was hungry.

“Wait here,” Jan commanded and rose from the table. He walked towards the smoking area, which was a sealed-off area at the back of the restaurant. As he opened the door, he was overwhelmed by the smell of stale cigarette smoke in the air. The

air conditioner was not turned up high enough to circulate the air, and a thick cloud of cigarette smoke filled the air.

In the corner sat a visibly overweight man, possibly in his late fifties. He wore a grey moustache that stretched past the corners of his mouth to his chin. He wore gold-rimmed glasses and a check print hat.

He beckoned Jan to come closer and take a seat at his table. As Jan approached him, he lit a pipe and started to suck at the stem. He exhaled the smoke from his mouth without inhaling it into his lungs, more like just puffing at the pipe than smoking and inhaling the smoke. After puffing a few times, he took a sip of the draught beer in front of him. "You must be Jan," he said politely.

Jan was quite taken aback by his politeness, and replied; "Yes, Jan Steyn."

"Is that the young man eating a burger?" he asked roughly pointing in the direction where Michael was seated.

"Yes, that's him," Jan replied confidently.

"He's rather old. Did you tell Greta his age?" Carl enquired.

"Yes, I did," Jan said, still standing next to the table.

Just then, the petite blond waitress entered the smoking area. As Carl noticed her enter through the door, he waved her away as an indication that they were not going to order and wanted to be left alone. She smiled politely, turned around and left.

"Greta said that he was perfect and that she had a potential buyer in France. She also said that she would be expecting the funds soon." Jan explained.

"Good. We will leave shortly. I will give her a call, just to confirm when I can expect my money and if she has made arrangements with Paul in Dar es Salam. Wait for me with the boy. Did you see the yacht called the Princess in the third bay?" Carl asked, as he lifted his beer to his mouth.

"Yes, I did," said Jan, "The yacht with raised upper deck?"

Carl nodded and gestured to Jan that he should leave and wait with Michael. Jan left the room, relieved to get fresh air. He walked over to where Michael was just about to finish his burger. The boy must have been hungry, he thought, as he sat at the table beside Michael.

"My boy, I have such exciting news. We're going on a boat trip." Michael's face lit up with excitement at the thought.

"Yes, it's true, in a big yacht. My friend said he would take us around the harbour. There is so much he wants to show us. Are you excited?" Jan bent over and came close to Michael's face, and asked; "You've never been on a yacht before, have you?" Jan spoke in a slightly high-pitched voice to exhibit his excitement. He leaned over to touch the top of Michael's head.

Michael couldn't stop smiling at the thought of it. He was so excited. Maybe he would see the Captain's daughter. He hoped that she was as pretty as the one who had served them. "Finish up. We will be leaving shortly," Jan explained to the visibly excited boy.

Carl had contacted Greta via his cell phone. She had confirmed that the boy was the perfect age and matched the buyer's requirements. She also confirmed that she would contact Paul in Dar es Salam and arrange for them to meet in three days' time. Once she received the deposit from the buyer, she would transfer the agreed, one hundred thousand rand, into Carl's bank account. She assured him that the transferred funds would reflect in her account within about seventy-two hours, and she would then pay Carl's money into his account, with a vehicle purchase, as a reference. Satisfied with her explanation, Carl rose from behind his table. He proceeded to the till and settled the bill. As he walked past Jan and Michael, he nodded at Jan to indicate that he was ready and it was time to leave.

"My boy, that is the Captain," Jan said to Michael, pointing roughly in the direction of Carl, whose large frame couldn't be missed. "Go with him and get us good seats. Let's sit near the front. I must pay the bill but will see you there shortly," Jan explained.

The young boy rose from the table and started to follow the big man as he was instructed. "Have you ever been on a yacht before, young man?" Carl enquired.

"No, never, this will be my first time, Sir," Michael replied nervously.

"You're going to love it, son. Maybe one day you'll own your own yacht," Carl replied while the two of them walked along the jetty towards the yacht. Carl placed his hand on the young

boy's shoulder as they walked, just to comfort him. Michael looked over his shoulder nervously as they walked, hoping to see his father, but he was nowhere to be seen.

"He will join us shortly," Carl said while patting the young boy on his shoulder. When they reached the yacht, Michael was astonished at its size. On the deck, he noticed a number of plastic tables and deck chairs. They continued to walk along the deck towards the front of the yacht. Michael noticed a flight of stairs leading to a covered area.

"That's where it all happens," explained Carl. "I steer the yacht from there." It was the highest accessible point on the yacht, excluding the masts. "Only the captain can go up there, because it is very dangerous. You might fall off and break your neck if you go up there," cautioned Carl.

He led the boy down a flight of stairs. "This is where we stay." Michael was impressed at the bar counter and lounge, which were fitted with two couches that doubled up as beds. He looked around nervously, and wondered what was taking his father so long to get here.

Michael wondered what seats he had to book for them, as he did not see any `front seats' or any other passengers on board. Michael had to fight back the tears nervously. He felt all alone and didn't want to leave without his dad. He suddenly developed an uncontrollable, nervous urge to pee and asked; "Where is the toilet, please, sir? I need to pee."

Carl took him by the arm and led him to the toilet, which was situated adjacent to the open lounge. While walking towards the toilet, Carl corrected him, simply saying, "We call it the head. Not the toilet."

Michael had to walk quite fast to get to the toilet so as not to wet his pants. As he entered the toilet, he heard the door being closed behind him. What a relief, he thought as he started to urinate in the toilet. He zipped up his pants and turned around to face the door. When he tried to push the door open, he realised that it was stuck. He pushed the door harder, but nothing happened. He decided to push his shoulder into the door using his body weight, but the door remained firmly shut.

In a panic, Michael started to yell for help, hoping that his father had finally arrived and would come to his rescue, but he heard nothing. He yelled louder. Panic struck; he started to feel

claustrophobic in the small cubical. He banged on the door in an attempt to be heard, but still there was no response. He wondered if he had been left alone on the yacht. If he could get out, where would he find his father, he thought.

Michael climbed on top of the toilet and peered through the port hole, hoping to see his father or anyone who could rescue him, but all he saw was the blue ocean waters, with the city in the distance. Michael started to cry, feeling alone and helpless. As he stood on the toilet peering through the port hole, he felt a sudden jerk, which nearly knocked him off balance.

He felt the yacht moving, and he became even more scared. He cried more loudly, uncontrollably, at the thought of him being trapped in the toilet and his father not being able to rescue him. He felt so alone, so helpless. The yacht continued to move forward, ever faster.

After what felt like forever, Michael got on top of the toilet again and peered out of the porthole. All he could see was water. Any signs of the city and its tall buildings had disappeared. Michael sat on the toilet with his head in his hands and sobbed uncontrollably. He missed his mother so much and wished that she was here to help and comfort him, but he knew she was very far away.

Jan caught a taxi back to his parents' home. He asked the taxi to drop him off at the mall. He needed a stiff drink to calm his nerves. The reality of what he had done started to sink in. He had no regrets, as this was payback, but now he had to be careful and follow through with his well-thought-out alibi. He had to make his story believable.

As he walked into Dennis's pub, he was again greeted by Charles's friendly smile. "Whiskey, Sir?" Charles enquired in his usual friendly manner.

"Yes, a double. Thanks," replied Jan with a dry mouth.

"Looks like you've seen a ghost, Sir. Everything alright?" asked Charles as he removed a glass from the shelf.

"Yes, I'm fine," replied Jan abruptly. Charles placed the whiskey in front of Jan and smiled. Jan gulped it down and ordered another. Charles obliged. Jan also gulped that drink down and moments later started to feel more relaxed, more in

control of himself. Jan paid for the whiskey, hurriedly left the pub, and walked towards the beach.

When he arrived at the beach, he started looking frantically for Michael, calling his name out loud over the sound of the waves. He walked briskly along the beach and called out for his son. He looked frantically from side to side and stared towards the sea while calling for Michael. Jan placed his right hand above his eyes to shelter them from the sun. He kept yelling his son's name at the top of his lungs, but Michael was nowhere to be seen.

Soon, two lifeguards came over. He quickly explained that he was looking for his son but couldn't see him anywhere. They asked where he had last seen him, to which he replied, "Right here on the beach."

The lifeguards scouted the beach and confirmed that the boy was nowhere to be seen. The more senior lifeguard started to talk on his two-way radio. "Zero Delta, Zero Delta, this is Bravo One come in." He started to shout into the handset to get a response from the other end.

A moment later, Jan heard a lady from the control room on the other end. "Yes, Bravo One. This is Zero Delta. What is your emergency?" she asked in a stern voice.

"We have a code ten six at North Beach," He reported. This was a code used for a missing child. A code had been allocated for missing children, as hundreds of children go missing every year on beaches around the country.

"Copied. NSRI (National Sea Rescue Institute) has been despatched to your location."

The other lifeguard ran frantically along the beach, looking towards the horizon in search of a possible drowning.

"How old is the boy, sir?" inquired the senior lifeguard.

"He is nine years old. He is wearing blue denim trousers and a WWF T-shirt. He is blond with blue eyes." The description of the missing boy was circulated on the two-way radio.

Whilst Jan was being interviewed, he noticed the red and white NSRI ski boat arrive. The four-man crew patrolled along the inside of the shark nets, which were beneath the red buoys that floated two hundred meters from the beach. They circled the area and patrolled slowly in search of any signs of a drowning victim.

Once they had come up empty-handed, they decided to head south and widen their search. It did happen that the ocean currents would take its victims far from where they originally got into trouble.

While being interviewed by the lifeguard, Jan heard the sirens of a number of vehicles coming towards them. With blue and red lights flashing, the vehicles came to a stop in the parking area at the mall. Jan noticed that there were red and white emergency vehicles with red lights, white cars with blue lights, which he recognised to be police vehicles, and orange vehicles, which were sea rescue vehicles.

Jan was approached by a uniformed officer who wanted a detailed explanation from him. Jan explained that his son was visiting him for the weekend, as he lives with his mother. They had decided to spend time together at the beach. Jan explained that he had left his son playing on the beach sand and had gone to the mall for a drink. He was away from his son for about half an hour. When he returned, his son was nowhere to be seen.

The officer took his statement and said that he would open a missing person's docket as a precautionary measure. The officer returned to his vehicle and circulated the description of the missing boy on the police radio. Jan stayed at the beach, watching the NSRI boat search frantically for his son. He dared not smile, as someone might notice, which might raise suspicion. He must be the frantic father! He paced up and down the beach, enquiring from strangers whether they had seen his son, but nobody could assist with any information.

Many hours elapsed before the search was called off. The senior lifeguard approached Jan. He explained that the NSRI was unable to find his son and that he should prepare himself for the worst. He said that, in all likelihood, his son's body might be washed up, but this could take several days because of the sea currents. He obtained Jan's contact and residential details and promised to be in contact should he have any further information.

Jan forced tears from his eyes and sniffed as he thanked the lifeguard for all they had done. The vehicles had left by that time, and soon the only sound Jan could hear was the cry of the seagulls and the crashing waves. He decided to head home to break the news to his parents.

As Jan entered the house, he noticed his father at the dinner table. He had his fishing tackle box on the table and was sorting through his tackle. His mother was out of sight but probably in the kitchen preparing dinner. Jan was visibly upset.

"Mom, Dad. I've got bad news," he said, fighting to hold back the tears. His dad looked up at him, and he heard his mother place a pot on the kitchen counter; before entering the dining room.

"What's it, my boy? What happened?" she asked in a terrified voice. "Are you okay? Where's Michael?"

"Michael is missing. I left him on the beach and went for a drink. When I came back, he was gone. I had the NSRI and police look for him, but nothing. He's nowhere to be found. The NSRI said that I should brace myself for the worst. They think he might have drowned. They searched for his body but said it might take a few days to be washed up on shore."

"That's all you want to do. Drink! Why the hell didn't you take him with you?" his father shouted out as he stood up from the table, waving his arms at Jan in frustration and anger.

"Dad, I did take him for a milkshake earlier. He was enjoying himself on the beach. I wasn't long anyway," Jan pleaded.

"It's still your fault. You need to be a responsible parent," his father said. He was upset by the news and had to remind himself that he had high blood pressure, and the doctor advised him not to get upset as this could affect his heart. Johan sat down at the table and remembered he had had a heart attack before and that the next one might be fatal.

"Oh, my poor boy," his mother said as she started to cry uncontrollably. Jan hated seeing his mother cry, so he, too, started crying. She walked closer to him, put her arms around his neck, and kissed him on the cheek.

"I'm sure he's fine. Did you look through the mall? You know how kids are these days. They can be so irresponsible. Or maybe he just got distracted by something at the mall," she said, trying to console him.

"Yes, Mom, the police did, but couldn't find him. The police have opened a missing person's docket. I'm sure he'll turn up somewhere. When they find him, I'm going to beat the crap out of him. "Jan said between his teeth.

"What are you going to tell Sarie?" Johan asked in a much calmer tone.

"I don't know yet, Dad. I'll give it some thought. I'll call her tomorrow, or maybe I won't need to call her. I'm hoping Michael will walk through the front door at any moment and that everything will be okay."

They sat eating dinner around the dinner table in silence, each in their own thoughts. Finally, Jan's mother broke the silence and asked if anyone would like seconds. Jan and his father hardly touched their food. Each was too upset by what had transpired that day.

"No thanks, mom. I'm exhausted and am going to bed early." Jan excused himself from the table and headed for the bedroom.

As he lay on his bed, he noticed Michael's little bag in the corner of the room. He wondered how Michael was. Did Carl at least feed him? Was he warm? He wondered how far they were and if they were experiencing good weather out at sea. His eyes grew heavy and started to close, and he fell asleep.

Johan, on the other hand, couldn't sleep. His wife had made him a cup of chamomile tea with his favourite ginger biscuits, but not even that could help him sleep. His gut feeling, combined with years of service as a police officer, made him feel uncomfortable and anxious.

The following morning, Johan decided to contact his friend, retired Murder and Robbery Colonel `Vossie' Vorster. He wanted his take on this story, and maybe he could also give some advice.

Colonel Vossie had become a fishing buddy, and they spent many hours together on the beach, discussing different events and cases they had experienced as police officers. Johan's mind was now at ease. He looked forward to seeing his old friend and getting advice from such an experienced detective. He was a wise and calm old man, and Johan was sure that Vossie must have been a wonderful commander during his many years with the police. He had a way with people, and he understood human nature.

Vossie once told him that he would be the lead interrogator when a suspect was arrested. His interrogation methods differed from those he was taught over the years, and

he was convinced his method worked. Vossie had proved to be a highly successful investigator and interrogator. He believed that when he visited a suspect in the police cells, he would ask the suspect how he was doing and if he needed anything. He would ask them if they were married and how the spouse was coping with the arrest. He asked if they had any children and how they were coping under these very difficult circumstances. He would ask how they were coping whilst he was incarcerated and how he could help the family while he was not there. He also asked if he smoked and, if so, if he had any cigarettes. Vossie didn't smoke but would instruct one of his detectives to buy a box of cigarettes for the suspect. If he was hungry, Vossie would arrange a takeout meal for the suspect, all paid for by the state out of the unit's "special funds".

Before the end of that day, they would chat about football, marriage, kids, or just about anything that came to mind, but not the matter for which he had been arrested. Vossie steered clear from talking about sex or religion as people are diverse with diverse ideas, and this often leads to confrontation or misunderstandings. By the second day, the suspect person would feel comfortable talking to Vossie. He gained their trust.

Vossie's philosophy was that if a suspect trusted him to help with his personal domestic problems, then how much more would he be trusted to help with the charges he faced? There was no need to interrogate or torture a suspect. It only took a few questions to clarify certain aspects of the charge, and usually, a suspect would confess to the crime, especially if a plea bargain was on offer. Johan fell asleep with a much lighter heart. He looked forward to meeting with his friend in the morning.

Early the following morning, Johan woke up. He managed to get out of bed without waking his wife. He knew Jan would still be asleep as the sun had not risen yet, and it was still dark. He knew Vossie was an early riser and that Vossie didn't sleep well. He put this down to his many years of service. Vossie never knew when the phone would ring for him to attend a murder scene or a shooting incident involving his members. He was on constant standby. Sometimes, he would be summoned to a crime scene and only return a week later. Years of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder didn't help his sleep patterns much either. He claimed that he witnessed too many senseless murders and attended too

many gruesome murder scenes in his time, all of which were perpetuated in his subconscious. Vossie would tell him that when the weather was bad at night, he couldn't sleep. Lightning and thunder would cause him to have flashbacks, which would result in night sweats. He would spend the entire night in front of the television set, trying to get his mind off what was happening around him and the havoc the weather was playing on his mind. It didn't help either that his wife passed away at an early age. He often blamed himself for not getting her to a doctor sooner for a proper diagnosis, but at the time, he wasn't at home much. His career demanded too much of his time. Within a year of contracting cancer, she was gone. Vossie had to live with regrets about what he could have or should have done.

Johan walked quietly to the lounge, where the telephone resided on a small table. He lifted the receiver and dialled Vossie's number, which he knew by heart. He had phoned him often enough to arrange fishing or to discuss a rugby or cricket match.

After a few short rings, Vossie answered, almost in a military fashion. "Good morning, this is Vossie speaking," he said as if he had been awake for hours.

"Morning Vossie, it's Johan."

Before he could continue, Vossie said; "Good morning, my old friend. What do you have planned for us today?"

Vossie enjoyed being busy. He believed that when you retire, you should be as active as you were when you were working. The old body doesn't always agree, but he believes in staying active and staying alive.

"I need to talk to you urgently this morning. Can we meet for coffee?" Johan asked.

"Is this about going to the cricket, this weekend? If it is, you're not going to convince me. It's just too expensive to go to the match. You can always come over to my place and watch it here. I'll stock up on a few cold beers," Vossie suggested.

"No, not that at all. It's a lot more serious. This is quite urgent. Please," Johan begged.

"All right, all right," Vossie said. "Come over to my place in an hour. I just need to shower."

Vossie also lived near the beach. His two-bedroom house was a sea-facing house, built about thirty years ago. Vossie kept

it neat and tried to do all the maintenance himself, but it did need a coat of paint, and Vossie has been promising for the last three years to get it done. He keeps saying it's one of the things on his "to-do" list, but he just hasn't got around to doing it. His home was a mere ten minutes' walk from Johan's home.

Johan replaced the telephone receiver and walked to his bedroom, where his wife still lay fast asleep. He quietly opened his cupboard door and removed a jacket. The wind is always chilly this time of the morning, just before sunrise. He dressed and snuck out of the house quietly, and headed up the street towards where Vossie lived.

Michael awoke to find himself still locked in the toilet cubical. He had spent the night lying on the floor. He didn't get much sleep, and by morning his blue eyes were puffy and swollen from crying. He had rested his head against the toilet bowl, in an attempt to get some sleep, but his position was too uncomfortable to get good rest. He woke when the sun rays came through the port hole above the toilet, and lit the interior of the toilet area. His mouth was dry, and his neck was stiff. He blinked his eyes several times, to shake himself from this nightmare, but realised that all this was not a nightmare. Nothing had changed.

He started to bang on the door again, hoping to draw attention. But still, there was nothing. The only sound he could hear was the sound of the water crashing against the hull of the boat as the boat sped forward. He climbed on the toilet seat and peered through the port hole, hoping to see somebody or recognise something, but there was nothing except water. As far as he looked, that's all he could see, and he started crying again.

Feelings of being alone and abandoned flooded his mind, and he felt so lost without his parents. He was scared and alone and had no idea where he was going or why. He sat on the floor with his elbows on his knees and just cried uncontrollably.

Hours later, he noticed it was getting dark, and nothing had changed. He was hungry and tired from the lack of sleep the night before and felt emotionally exhausted. He was exhausted from all the crying and from his depression, but there was nothing he could do but wait to see what would happen to him. Nobody came to his rescue, and he missed his mother so very much.

After about fifteen minutes, Johan knocked on Vossie's front door. "I'm coming, Johan," he heard Vossie call.

A few moments later, Vossie opened the door and was met by his friend, who held out his hand to greet him with his broad, welcoming smile. Vossie invited him in, saying he'd just boiled the kettle and would make them a cup of coffee.

"Sit," said Vossie, "Make yourself comfortable. I won't be long." A short while later, Vossie returned carrying two cups of strong black coffee. He handed Johan a cup of coffee and sat on the two-seat lounge suite opposite Johan.

"What's on your mind?" Vossie asked after taking a sip of the coffee.

"It's Michael, my grandson," Johan answered.

"Oh no, I hope he's not in trouble. Shoplifting or something like that? I know what kids get up to these days." Vossie replied.

"No, no, nothing like that. It's much worse."

Vossie sat back and listened intensely like he would when interviewing a suspect. "Carry on," said Vossie, wanting Johan to tell him the whole story, before asking any questions.

"Michael arrived by bus yesterday to visit his dad for the weekend. You know that Jan and Sarie are divorced. Yesterday morning, when he arrived, Jan said that they were going to spend time together on the beach. It was after five that Jan came home and said that Michael was missing. He claims that he drowned while he left him alone and went to the mall for a drink. I don't know. It sounds fishy. He just seems to be too calm about it," Johan explained., his voice trembled slightly as he spoke.

"What do you think, Vossie? You have a lot of experience with these sorts of cases."

"The best thing is to follow your gut. It's normally right. If your gut feels something is wrong, it probably is. How would you like me to help, Johan?" Vossie asked in a sympathetic voice.

"I know you still have connections in the Murder and Robbery Unit. Can't you ask them to look into it for me? Jan said that they had opened a missing person docket. Please, Vossie, something just doesn't feel right. I just don't trust Jan, especially after he killed his first wife and now divorced his second."

"Sure, my friend. It's been a while since I've spoken to those guys, but let me see what I can do. I'll make a few calls." He

placed his coffee cup on the table and walked his visibly distressed friend to the door. “I’ll talk to you later, my friend.”

“Please, if we would keep this between us, just for now anyway. I think it would be better that way. My wife is already in such a state over this. You know she is very fond of the little boy,” Johan said as he walked through the door.

“I understand. You have my word,” Vossie replied.

Johan walked briskly home, hoping his wife and Jan were still asleep. Johan opened the front door quietly and walked slowly into his home. He was relieved to find his bedroom door, and the spare room door still closed, and his wife and Jan were still asleep. He proceeded to the kitchen to make his wife a cup of coffee.

Vossie looked at his wristwatch. It was eight o’clock. He thought this would be a good time to call as the morning meeting should be over by now. He dialled the number of a good friend, and commander of the Murder and Robbery Unit in Durban, General Coetzee. After a short few rings, Vossie heard his friend's familiar voice on the phone.

“Coetzee,” he said abruptly.

Vossie smiled at the sound of his voice and said; “Gert, morning. It’s Vossie. How are you?”

“Vossie, my old friend, how you doing? Sure you must be enjoying your retirement?”

“Yes, it’s fine, thank you. Just trying to keep out of trouble, you know how it goes,” Vossie replied, still smiling.

“What can I do for you, Vossie? I know you’re not phoning me to join you for fishing.”

Vossie cleared his throat and replied; “No, not at all. A friend of mine’s grandchild went missing yesterday at North Beach, and there’s just something fishy about his disappearance. My friend thinks his son, who is also the father of the missing boy, could be involved,” Vossie explained.

Gert thought for a while, then answered, “All the routine checks were followed regarding a missing child, I assume?” he asked.

“Yes, and still nothing. Apparently, a missing person’s docket has been opened,” said Vossie. He was trying to be as helpful as he could possibly be.

"Okay, I'll send one of my detectives over there to see if he can find out anything about the missing child. I'll keep you posted, Vossie, but as you know, literally hundreds of kids go missing every year, just from the Durban beachfront area alone, but let's see what we can do."

"Thanks, Gert. I really appreciate it. Keep me posted if you can." He replaced the receiver.

Gert Coetzee dialled the office number of one of his lead detectives. Ozzie de Lange promptly answered the phone only to hear the voice of his commander on the other end.

"Please come to my office," Gert commanded, and he hung up. Within minutes, Ozzie knocked at his commander's door and entered.

"A boy went missing at North Beach yesterday under suspicious circumstances. I would like you to ask a few questions and find out what's going on. Don't spend too much time on this, as there are other more pressing cases you need to deal with. A missing person's docket has been opened. Sign for it at the charge office and see what you can come up with."

"Sir, I have the Bezuidenhout murder to work on. The high court trial date has been set, and I need to deal with the prosecutor's queries," Ozzie objected.

"I'm aware of that case. That's why I said don't spend too much time on this missing person's case. Report back to me tomorrow morning and I'll make a decision as to the way forward." Gert's instructions were very clear and Ozzie realised that there was no way he was going to get out of it.

"Yes, Sir," he replied and left the office.

Ozzie signed for the docket at the charge office and decided to interview the lifeguard, Shawn Johnson. He contacted Shawn on his cell phone and made arrangements to meet him on the beach within an hour. On Ozzie's arrival at North Beach, he met a friendly and helpful Shawn Johnson.

"Morning Shawn. I'm Detective Inspector Ozzie de Lange from the Murder and Robbery Unit. I'm investigating the case of the boy that went missing yesterday and would like to ask you some questions," Ozzie said to the well-tanned, long-haired, lean lifeguard.

"Yes, sure, anything to help," Shawn replied with a broad smile exhibiting his perfect white teeth.

"I understand that you were working yesterday?"

"Yes, I work every day. I love my job," Shawn replied, nodding his head.

"Good. Now, did you see this blond boy? His father said, in his affidavit, that he left him playing on the beach when he disappeared. Did you see the boy?"

"Umm," Shawn said, scratching his curly blond hair in thought. "I don't know, I can't say for sure. There were quite a few people on the beach yesterday, you know," he said with a slight tremor in his voice.

"And your assistant. Where is he?"

Shawn whistled loudly towards the lifesaver's tower, and a younger lifeguard came running towards them. "Hi, I'm Gift," he said in a good English accent.

"Gift, tell me. Did you see a blond boy playing on the beach yesterday?" Ozzie enquired.

"I remember," Shawn said. "His old man said he left him playing around here," Shawn pointed roughly to where he was describing.

"What about you, Gift? Did you see the boy?" Ozzie asked.

"Hey, dude, I was hanging with my girlfriend and pointed to a pretty blond in a red bikini." She looked no more than fifteen years old, probably a school dropout, Ozzie thought. Interracial relationships were becoming more prevalent on the beaches, so it didn't come as a shock to him.

"I didn't see a small boy playing here, but then again, I was more focused on what was happening in the sea and my girlfriend, of course," Gift replied.

Ozzie turned his attention to Shawn again. "So, Shawn, are you sure you didn't see a child playing there," pointing to the area that Shawn had shown him earlier.

"Yes, I'm sure, dude. I thought it was strange when the boy's old man pointed out this area to me," Shawn replied with confidence.

Ozzie started to wonder if the child had really disappeared from the beach, as none of the lifesavers had seen the boy.

Ozzie examined Jan's affidavit and found Jan's address. He needed some clarity from Jan, so he proceeded to the house, which was situated not far from the main beach.

On his arrival at the simple two-bedroom beach house, he knocked on the door. He was greeted by a well-mannered man in his late sixties. "Morning, Sir," greeted Ozzie. "My name is Detective Inspector De Lange from the Murder and Robbery Unit. I'm investigating the disappearance of Michael Steyn. May I come in?"

"Yes, of course, young man," Johan said pleasantly. He gestured to the police officer that he should come in and take a seat in the lounge. "Coffee?" Johan asked.

"No, thank you. Is Mr Jan Steyn perhaps here? I would like to ask him a few questions regarding his son's disappearance," Ozzie enquired.

"No, unfortunately not. He left quite early this morning. He said he had a job offer and was going to the mall. Is there anything I can help with?"

"Do Jan and Michael live with you?" Ozzie enquired.

"Oh no, they're just visiting. Jan arrived last week, and Michael arrived on Sunday. You see, Jan and his wife Sarie are divorced. She stays in Pretoria. They have joint custody over Michael, and it was Jan's turn to have Michael for the weekend. He came down by bus," Johan explained.

"Do you perhaps have Sarie's contact details? Said Ozzie.

"Meisie," called Johan turning his body towards the kitchen. "Please bring my diary."

A few minutes later, Johan's wife walked into the lounge carrying a black leather-bound diary. She greeted Ozzie as she walked towards her husband, and Ozzie greeted in return. She handed her husband the diary and excused herself. She appeared puzzled as to why the police were involved in Michael's disappearance but assumed this was a routine police investigation regarding a missing child. She turned and walked back toward the kitchen. Johan adjusted his glasses on his nose and started to page through the diary until he came across her name and stopped.

"I don't have a cell number, and she works at the correctional services in Pretoria," Johan said, trying to be as

helpful as he could be. He gave Ozzie her work contact details and said, “Sorry, that’s the only number I have for her.”

Ozzie smiled and recorded the number in the investigation diary in the docket. Ozzie decided that this might not be the right time to interview Jan. He would first make other discreet enquiries before contacting him. He was sure that he would not deviate from his affidavit anyway, which really didn’t cast any light on Michael’s disappearance. Ozzie thanked Johan for his time and exited the house. He decided that he would call Sarie. He wanted to establish the relationship between her and Jan.

At his office, Ozzie moved around his desk and sat on his chair. He opened the docket and dialled the number Johan had given him. The voice at the other end answered, and he asked if he could speak with Sarie. The person asked that he hold as his call was being transferred. Ozzie hated being put on hold. He found the music annoying and didn’t calm him down, but rather made him quite agitated.

After quite a long wait, the phone was finally answered. The lady at the other end simply said, “Sarie, hello?”

Ozzie cleared his throat and spoke. “Morning, Sarie. You’re speaking to Detective Inspector De Lange from the Murder and Robbery Unit in Durban.” He heard the phone going dead at the other end. “Hello, Sarie, can you hear me?” Ozzie asked.

“Yes, I can.” She said with a chill in her voice. “How can I help you?”

“I’m phoning about your son Michael.”

Before he could continue, she interrupted, “Is he okay?” she asked with a note of panic in her voice.

Ozzie realised that Jan had not contacted her to tell her of Michael’s disappearance and that he would have to break the news. He found this very strange but continued.

“I’m investigating his disappearance yesterday from North Breach. There was a long pause at the other end.

She finally spoke again in disbelief. “Where is Jan? He is supposed to be looking after him,” she said, sniffing.

“I’m sorry, but there seems to be no sign of him. The NSRI also searched the sea, but could not find him,” Ozzie explained.

“I hate that bastard! I had a feeling something would happen to Michael; I just knew it. Why hasn’t he told me? I’m sure Jan is hiding Michael from me. What’s going on? Have you

arrested him? The lying sod! They should never have released him. He belongs in jail." Sarie started to cry again after finishing her outburst.

"Do you mean he's been in jail before?" Ozzie enquired.

"Yes, that's where I met him. I'm a doctor at C Max Correctional Services. He was serving time for murdering his first wife," she explained.

`This leaves more questions than answers,' Ozzie thought. He wasn't able to conduct this interview over the phone. He had to meet her in person.

"Will it be alright with you if I come and see you tomorrow?" Ozzie asked. "I think we have a lot to talk about."

"Yes, that's fine" she replied. "Just ask for me at reception."

Ozzie thought it would be strange for Jan to hide Michael when all Michael's clothes were still at Jan's father's home. Ozzie remembered Johan telling him that Michael's bag with clothes was in the spare room. The bag remained unopened, and Johan was sure Michael's clothing was still inside it.

Michael heard the toilet cubical being opened as he sat on the floor with his head in his hands. He was tired and hungry. `It's my dad at last,' he thought as he jumped to his feet, and his face lit up with excitement. `He's come to rescue me. I wonder what took him so long.' Michael had spent two days and two nights in the cubicle.

He stared at the door as it opened slowly, hoping to jump into his dad's loving arms, only to find, to his disappointment, the frame of the large man that had accompanied him onto the yacht.

"Here," said the large man as he handed Michael a plate of baked beans; "Eat and wash your face; we're nearly there," he briefly instructed as he closed the door again.

Michael could hear it being locked from the outside again. He sat on the toilet and ate the beans with his fingers, shoving as much as he could into his mouth. He was starving. He licked the plate before placing the plate on the floor.

Michael wondered what the man meant by; "We're nearly there," so he climbed on top of the toilet to look out of the port hole again. Far in the distance, Michael could see land. It looked

very pretty and green. He could not see any buildings or recognise anything, and he realised he was totally lost. It crossed his mind that if he was left there, he would have no idea how to get home. He had no idea where he was.

The thought made him cry again. Michael felt the yacht swing sharply to his left. He peered through the port hole and noticed some buildings in the far distance, none of which he recognised.

What felt like about an hour later, Michael could see that they were arriving at a harbour. He could see boats docked in the harbour, but these boats weren't as lavish as the one he was on. They looked simple and homemade, possibly fishing boats. He was sure this was not the same harbour they had left a long time ago.

A while later, the yacht slowed down and came to a standstill. He sat on the toilet, wondering what next to expect. He heard the cubicle door being unlocked again, and the large framed man stood in front of it.

"Come, we've arrived," he said as he grabbed Michael by the scruff of the neck. Michael was relieved to be out of the cubicle at last. Finally, he could stretch his legs and breathe and smell fresh air.

He walked with the large man down the gangplank towards the jetty. Michael noticed how busy people were. There was a strong smell of fish in the air. He looked around and noticed people had big grass baskets of fish. There was a lot of noise as people were buying fresh fish, crabs and octopus. Some people had small boats and were offloading baskets of fish and nets full of fish. They were selling their catch to others who were selling it to merchants. The noise and the smell of the fish gave Michael a headache, and he started to feel nauseous.

They continued to walk along a narrow road towards a huge building that was situated on the beachfront a distance away. The huge double-storey building had tall palm trees in front of it and had a well-kept walkway from the road that ran parallel to the beachfront to the entrance of the building.

When they came closer, Michael noticed a fish pond with a statue of a giant fish squirting water from its mouth near the entrance. He realised that this was a hotel. How cool would it be if they were on holiday here? His mom and dad might be waiting

inside for him, he thought. He would spend his time in the swimming pool and would eat ice cream. He would walk along the beach with his mom, and they would feed the seagulls. Michael became excited at the thought of it. They would have so much fun, and his dad would play ball with him on the beach, and his mom would rub sunscreen on his shoulders and buy him nice things; he fantasised as they walked up the stairs towards the hotel entrance.

As they approached the main entrance, the door was opened for them by a very dark man in a white dress and red cloth around his head and waist. He greeted them with a smile as they entered the building. Michael was astonished by its size. The pillars and high ceilings made it look even bigger than it was. At the centre of the entrance was a reception desk manned by a very dark but tall and slender woman, who smiled at him briefly. Michael wondered why they had walked past her. As they approached another door, it, too, was opened for them by a man in a white dress. He greeted them, saying; "Good morning to you, Sir."

The big man didn't reply but continued to walk into an area filled with tables and chairs. In the corner sat a well-dressed man, sipping at a cup of tea. He paged through a newspaper and puffed at a thick cigar. As they approached him, he placed the cup on the saucer and rose from his seat with an outstretched hand.

"Good morning, Carl. How very good to see you," he said. He wiped his thin moustache with his serviette and smiled. Michael could hear that this man was from another country but was not quite sure where.

"Take a seat, please. You must be exhausted after your trip. A cup of tea, perhaps?" he said as he sat down again.

"No, a beer, thanks, Stephan." Stephan beckoned to the waiter to bring a beer.

"So this must be the little boy Greta told me about. A handsome young fella, isn't he?" said Stephan, trying to make conversation, to which there was no reply. The waiter returned with a beer and placed it in front of Carl. Carl eagerly lifted the glass to his mouth and started to gulp its contents.

"So, young man, are you enjoying your holiday so far? I hope Mr Carl has been treating you well. Soon, we will be going

to a holiday resort where your dad will meet us," Stephan explained.

Michael's face lit up with excitement for the first time as he raised his eyes to meet Stephan's. The thought of being on holiday with his dad and not trapped in a nightmare gave him a huge sense of relief. He had never before had a holiday with his dad, or his mom for that matter.

"It's quite a long drive, but it will be well worth it. We're going to a safari lodge. You and your dad will go on game drives, and you'll be able to see lots of wild animals."

Michael grew excited at the thought of being on holiday in a safari lodge with his dad and being able to see real wild animals for the first time. He had never seen real wild animals before. He remembered that his mom took him to the zoo once, but that wasn't the same as seeing animals in the wild. The memories of his ordeal on the yacht quickly passed as he was filled with excitement. Michael noticed that the two men didn't have much to say to each other. The big man gulped his beer, rose from his chair, and said: "Well, I better be on my way." He thanked Stephan for the beer, patted Michael on the head, and headed back out of the door. Within minutes, he was nowhere to be seen.

"We had better be on our way, young man," said Stephan. He rose from the table and summoned the waiter. He paid the bill and walked towards the door with his newspaper folded under his arm. Michael followed excitedly as they walked out of the building and towards the parking area at the back of the hotel.

"Jump in, boy, it's time to go," said Stephan as he got in behind the wheel. The Land Rover was so high. Michael thought he was climbing a tree. When he finally managed to sit on the front seat, he felt like he was looking down on the world. This was going to be so much fun, he thought as the vehicle started to move forward.

They drove through the dusty town for quite a long time. The taxis, noise and people walking across the road with total disregard for traffic hampered their speed. Michael was eventually relieved to be out of the town and on the open road. He enjoyed the wind in his hair, the fresh smell of nature and the beautiful scenery of the bush. They drove in silence without

talking. Stephan's friendly manner when they had first met had disappeared. He now remained silent and only focused on his driving and the road ahead of him.

As evening fell, they arrived at a lodge. Michael stared in awe at the large thatch roof building. It was so beautiful here, and Michael wondered if this was where they would be spending their holiday. As they drove through the gate, Michael read a big sign at the entrance, which read `Welcome to Utanga River Lodge'. Stephan parked the Land Rover and got out.

"Come, this is where we will be spending the night," he said to Michael as he stretched. Michael also got out of the vehicle and yawned as he stretched his arms above his head. Michael was excited to be seeing his father.

He followed Stephan into the reception area, where a friendly domestic lady behind a desk greeted them. "How are you today, Mr Stephan?" she asked.

He replied, "Fine, thanks. A room for two for one night, thanks." She smiled as she handed him a key. "Also, please send me a pot of tea and a Coca-Cola. We'll also have your special of the day if you could send it to my room; thanks." The lady smiled at him and nodded.

Stephan and Michael walked briskly through the lobby area. Michael thought that the smell of thatch and furniture polish was so pleasant and refreshing. They walked until they came to a corridor, which they walked along until they reached their room. Stephan unlocked the door and opened it for them. They walked in, and Stephan sat on the bed and removed his shoes. He gave a big sigh of relief as he could finally rest.

Michael wondered if his dad was going to meet them here and if they would go on a game drive today. He then dismissed the idea of going on a game drive at this time, as they would probably eat, and then it would probably be too late to go on a drive. Michael lay on his back on his bed, staring at the roof. The gum poles and thatch roof looked so nice, he thought. He had never before been in a thatched building. His mom and dad would love it here. It's so quiet and peaceful. He wondered where his dad would sleep as there were only two single beds in this room. He would probably get his own room, and he would join his father in their own room later, he thought.

The knock at the door broke the silence and startled Michael as he was about to fall asleep. “Your drinks, Mr Stephan.” They heard from the other side of the door.

“Yes, come in,” Stephan said as he sat up on the bed.

A man dressed in a colourful shirt and red trousers opened the door and entered the room carrying a tray. He placed a can of Coca-Cola, a glass, and a teapot with a teacup and saucer on the small round table near the mirror.

“I will bring your dinner shortly, Sir,” he said as he turned around and exited the room. Stephan walked towards the table and poured himself a cup of tea. He handed Michael the Coca-Cola and a glass without saying a word. Stephan sat at the round table and started to sip at the tea, holding the saucer under the tea cup as he drank.

Before Michael was finished with his cold drink, there was a knock on the door again, to which Stephan replied, “Yes, come in.” The same waiter entered carrying a tray with two plates. He placed the plates on the round table and said, “Todays’ special, Sir. A two-hundred-gram steak, prepared just the way you like it, with baked potato and mixed vegetables.” He smiled and left the room.

“Come eat,” Stephan commanded as he pulled his chair closer to the table. Michael was starving. He, too, pulled a chair closer to the table, and both ate their meals in silence.

A while later, the waiter came back to the room and removed the dishes.

Stephan finally spoke. He said, “Better you have an early night. We have a long drive ahead of us tomorrow.” Michael’s heart sank at the news. He thought this was their holiday destination. He had expected that his dad would meet them here and that they would go on the game drive.

“Where is my dad?” Michael demanded.

“Take it easy, young man. We’re not there yet. The place we’re going to is much better than this. Your dad is already there, waiting for us,” Stephan explained.

Disappointment turned into excitement again as Michael lay back on his bed, thinking of all the fun he was going to have with his dad. They would swim together, and his dad would throw him into the air before he crashed into the water. He had seen his friend’s dads do that with them, and it looked like so much

fun. Michael fell asleep quickly on a luxurious bed with fresh linen and a soft pillow. The last two days had been traumatic and emotionally exhausting.

When Michael woke, he saw Stephan was already awake. He had already showered, shaved and was dressed. “Come on, it’s time to go. Your dad’s waiting,” he said to a very sleepy Michael.

Michael excitedly jumped out of bed and rushed to the bathroom to wash his face. Stephan paid the bill, and they headed out of the building and towards the parking area where the Land Rover was waiting. Michael climbed in and was very excited that later today, he would finally see his dad again. Stephan sped off, leaving a cloud of dust behind them.

They drove all day, only stopping to refuel. The sun had set by the time they had reached their destination. The excitement of seeing his father was building up inside of him.

Michael had often wondered how much further they would be travelling but dared not ask; Stephan seemed to be in a bad mood and didn’t say a word the entire day. After travelling on a badly tarred road, they eventually turned off and travelled through the bush on a single-lane gravel road until finally, the vehicle lights shone on a brick building, which looked like an old, dilapidated house. With the help of the vehicle headlights, Michael noticed it had a red tin roof. There was no garden, and there were no trees around the house. There was no swimming pool and no wild animals. He wondered what purpose the fence served as it was low and not well maintained. There were no other houses in the area, and it was very dark.

They had passed through a little dusty town about two hours ago. This town consisted of a garage and a shop. It had a single gravel road that passed through the middle of it. They were now in the middle of nowhere. Disappointment engulfed Michael as he alighted from the vehicle when it finally came to a stop in a cloud of dust. Maybe his father was waiting inside for them, or maybe they still had to travel further to get to their holiday destination.

As they stopped, a young black man came out of the house and walked towards them. Michael noticed that he was carrying a long firearm—the kind he had seen in war movies on TV. The black guy approached the vehicle with his firearm pointed in their

direction. When this guy recognised Stephan, he lowered his firearm and greeted him. Stephan greeted in return as he walked into the vehicle's lights.

"Come," the black guy said to Michael as he grabbed him by the arm. He pulled Michael towards the house and walked through the front door. As they entered the house, Michael noticed five other black males inside. They were all armed with long firearms, and they sat around the table playing cards. They were drinking and smoking and laughing as they spoke loudly to each other. Michael was pulled through the house, down the passage. When they reached a heavy wooden door, they stopped. Michael could hear the engine of the Land Rover start up again before the vehicle sped off, and the sound of the engine became fainter as the vehicle drove further away.

Michael started to cry uncontrollably. He realised that something was wrong. He had not seen his father, and Stephan had just left him there. He was lost and afraid. The black guy hit him across the face with the back of his hand, and Michael fell to the floor—a small trickle of blood from his upper lip. The black guy pulled him up by his hair and glared at him.

"Shut up!" he snarled, as he unlocked the solid wooden door and pushed Michael inside.

It took a while for Michael's eyes to adjust to the dim light inside, and he could see only a candle burning in the corner of the room as he stumbled into the dark room before falling to the floor. He heard the door being slammed and locked behind him. As he crawled towards the candlelight, he could faintly make out the figures of other children sitting on the floor in the corner.

"Hello," he cried out.

A few moments later, he heard the sound of a little girl. "Hello," she replied. He moved towards the sound of her voice. He could faintly see the silhouette of the young girl against the dim light of the candle.

"My name is Michael," he said.

"I'm Yolande," she replied.

Michael moved closer and sat on the floor beside her. Michael finally broke the long silence and asked, "How long have you been in here?"

She replied that she wasn't sure, but it was a long time. They could hear the men talking and laughing in the kitchen as

they huddled together in the corner of the dimly lit room. The concrete floor was cold, and they managed to cover themselves with the thin blanket.

”How did you get here?” he asked. “Where are you from?”

“I’m from Joburg,” explained Yolande, fighting back the tears. “I came here by boat,” she explained. “There were other older girls in here when I arrived, but they have all since left.”

Michael wanted to know so much more, but he was tired from the long drive and soon felt sleepy. His eyes became heavy and tired. He soon fell asleep beside Yolanda.

The following morning, Ozzie briefed his commanding officer on his findings. Gert agreed that Ozzie should go to Pretoria to interview Sarie as a matter of urgency. It just didn’t seem normal for a husband not to tell his ex-wife and mother of their child that the child was missing.

When Ozzie arrived at the C Max prison in Pretoria, he went to the reception and asked to see Sarie. The lady at the reception telephoned Sarie’s office and told her that there was someone there to see her. The lady came back to Ozzie and offered him a seat while he waited for Sarie, which Ozzie declined.

After a few minutes, Sarie appeared through a side door. She greeted Ozzie by hand and suggested they go somewhere and talk. Sarie didn’t want anyone at her work to know her personal business, and she had always prided herself in keeping her personal life out of her career.

Ozzie agreed and followed Sarie out of the prison. Sarie pointed to a coffee shop across the road. They ran through the traffic and Ozzie held the door open for Sarie as they entered the quaint little coffee shop. Ozzie spotted a vacant table near the corner and pulled the chair out for Sarie. They made themselves comfortable at a table before being approached by a waitress, who took their order. Both ordered a coffee. Ozzie noticed that Sarie had been crying. Her eyes were puffy in spite of the amount of makeup she had applied as a disguise.

In a very business-like manner, Sarie got straight to the point. “What do you have for me so far regarding Michael’s disappearance?” she asked.

"Well, not much at this stage. I was hoping to ask you a few questions that might assist us in our investigation," Ozzie responded. "I hear that you and Jan are divorced," he asked.

"Yes, for three months now." She said as the waitress placed their coffee on the table in front of them.

"What was the marriage like," Ozzie asked, holding his pen on his notepad.

"I loved Jan. While he was in prison, he was so kind, so helpful, and so sweet. He regretted killing his first wife and showed true remorse for what he had done." Sarie explained that she knew from the prison files that Jan had been in the Security Police and that he had impulsively shot his wife.

Sarie found Jan attractive. The spark between them flared, and they talked about what would happen when he had served his sentence. They even started to talk about love. Jan thought it would be fine for him to walk out of prison with someone like Sarie waiting for him. She could help him back on his feet.

Jan served only four years and three months of his ten-year service. At the end of 1993, he was paroled from prison, into Sarie's arms and into her bed. By the following February, Sarie was pregnant.

"We married shortly afterwards. I really thought that he had changed, and he had for the first while anyway." Sarie managed to keep him on the straight and narrow for a while. His prison sentence barred him from returning to the police, and he couldn't find a job. Jan had a weakness. He simply could not keep his eyes off pretty women. His work as a policeman and his dealings with criminals in jail had also left its mark. It was a kind of feeling that he was untouchable and literally able to get away with murder. He became prone to spontaneous outbursts of fury.

She now understood why he had been given the nickname `The Hitman' for being ever ready to use his fists. He started to drink heavily and lost all ambitions. He couldn't find a job and became depressed.

"I just couldn't take the verbal and physical abuse any longer, so I decided to divorce him." Sarie took a sip of her coffee, trying to gather herself. She became emotional, thinking about her wasted time with Jan.

"What was his relationship with Michael like?" Ozzie asked while taking notes.

"Not that good. Jan didn't spend much time with Michael. He only cared about himself and dwelled in self-pity. He treated Michael quite badly and spoke to him like he was no good. He constantly broke Michael down. When I intervened, I was either slapped across the face or punched on my head. Many nights, I would sit on Michael's bed and stroke his head until he stopped crying and eventually fell asleep." She explained, wiping her nose with a tissue.

"There is no evidence or reason to believe that Michael drowned. NSRI was there in minutes and searched the entire area for Michael, but couldn't find him. If he had drowned, his body would have washed up by now. There's just no trace of him." Ozzie shook his head whilst explaining to Sarie.

"I interviewed the lifeguards on duty at the time, and they cannot with certainty recall seeing him playing on the beach where Jan had said he had left him. Is there any reason you could think of why Jan would harm Michael or cause his disappearance?" Ozzie asked, looking Sarie directly in the eyes.

"Yes," Sarie said without hesitation. "Yes. Only to get back at me."

Ozzie was quite taken back by her sudden response and couldn't think of any other questions he had at this point, so he handed Sarie his card and said, "Please, Sarie, if there is anything you could possibly think of that would help the investigation, please don't hesitate to contact me."

He rose and placed a note under the ashtray, enough to cover the bill, and turned to leave.

"Just one more thing," Sarie said whilst looking up at Ozzie. "When Jan was in prison, and when we were married, he had a white bible that was never far from his reach. His first serious teenage love had given him the Bible. She had written on the flyleaf "J. Steyn," and the dedication in her neat hand; "This bible will keep you from sin. Sin will keep you from this book." He would spend every free moment seeking answers and finding solace in it. The Bible became his most treasured possession, and he read it from Genesis to Revelation. He studied it and was especially interested in the book of Joshua. I'm not sure if this information will help trace Michael, but it's just a bit of information that might prove interesting."

Ozzie proceeded to the offices of the Murder and Robbery Unit in Pretoria. He walked in and proceeded to the commanding officer's office, Colonel Scheepers.

"Good afternoon he said to the Colonel, who was seated behind his desk. His desk was covered in dockets, and Ozzie realised that he was busy inspecting the docket.

"Sorry to bother you, Colonel. I'm Inspector de Lange from Durban Murder and Robbery. I was wondering if I could steal a few minutes of your time?"

The Colonel looked up over the pile of dockets and waved to a chair. "Yes, sit. How can I help?"

"Colonel, I'm investigating a missing child case, and wondered if you could tell me anything about a `Jan Steyn'."

"Who?" asked the Colonel, looking at Ozzie with his glasses at the end of his nose.

"Jan Steyn, Sir. He was a police officer who killed his wife many years ago. He was sent to prison, and married a lady who works in the prison." The Colonel thought for a while, crunching his nose.

"Oh yes, I remember him now. He was in the Security Branch. His father was also in the service, wasn't he?" the Colonel asked. "Yes, sir. He's now retired."

The Colonel turned to the computer on his desk and accessed the CAS (Crime Administrative System). He typed in the name `Jan Steyn' and said; "Inspector du Toit, he was the lead investigator in the case against him. Maybe he could give you some insight into his character."

He leaned across to his phone and called Inspector du Toit on his cell phone. "Hi, Luke. Where are you now? I have an Inspector de Lange in my office. He would like to talk to you about Jan Steyn. Okay, good. Five minutes, you say," he said, replacing the receiver. "Please take a seat. He won't be long," the Colonel said as he returned to his docket inspection.

A few minutes later, a hugely overweight man in his mid-fifties walked into the office. "Colonel," he greeted and turned his attention to Ozzie, who was seated on the sofa. "Inspector Du Toit." He said with an outstretched hand. Come, let's talk in my office."

Inspector du Toit walked through the door first and walked to his office. He sat behind his desk, slightly out of breath and said, “Right, how can I help you?”

Ozzie sat down and replied, “I’m investigating a case of a missing child. It’s the child of Jan Steyn. I believe you know him?” Ozzie asked.

“That piece of shit! He was a good cop in his day, but he went off the rails. He killed his wife in cold blood, the bastard! It was one of the most gruesome scenes I’ve attended in my thirty-five years of service. I heard he married Sarie from the Correctional Services. They are now divorced, right?” Inspector du Toit enquired.

”Yes, they’re divorced now. I’m trying to find a motive. I don’t believe the kid drowned or was kidnapped in broad daylight. Do you think he could harm the kid to get back at Sarie?” Ozzie asked, leaning forward.

“I wouldn’t put anything past that shithead,” Luke Du Toit replied. “If I can help, just shout. Sorry I can’t be of any more assistance.”

Ozzie left the office feeling that he had wasted his time talking to Luke du Toit, but it was worth a shot in the dark.

As Ozzie was walking to his car, he heard his cell phone ring. When he answered, he heard Sarie on the other end. “Hello Ozzie, you don’t mind if I call you by your first name, do you?” she said with some excitement in her voice.

”No, not at all. What can I do for you, Sarie?” Ozzie asked.

“I found out something that you might find interesting. Can we meet at the coffee shop?”

“Yes, sure, I can be there in fifteen minutes,” Ozzie said as he climbed into his car. When Ozzie arrived at the coffee shop, Sarie was already waiting for him. He noticed that she had a file on the table in front of her. He proceeded to sit opposite her at the table.

“What is it, Sarie?” he asked.

“I spoke to my Superintendent about what we had discussed, and she was horrified. She somehow recalled that Jan had been incarcerated with the notorious Piet Van Rensburg.”

Sarie decided to go to the archives and draw the relevant detention files. Sarie opened the file in front of her. She paged through them and came across the document that she was after.

“Here, you see. Jan and Piet were detained in the same block for two weeks.” She exclaimed with excitement.

Ozzie didn’t understand the relevance of this and asked her to explain. “Remember all those children that disappeared without a trace, most of whom were kidnapped from school in the late eighties and early nineties? Well this is the same Piet Van Rensburg. He was detained as a suspect by the lead investigator at the time. Due to the lack of evidence, he was released by the court. The missing children have remained a mystery ever since. One day, I was treating an inmate for a stab wound, and he told me that Piet Van Rensburg had confessed to him that he had kidnapped those children for sale to couples in Europe who couldn’t have children. I passed this information over to the lead detective in Johannesburg, but nothing came of it.

“A few months later, Piet Van Rensburg was found dead in his home, with a bullet in the head. It was concluded that he committed suicide with his girlfriend, who was also a suspect in the disappearance of those children. His licenced revolver was found next to his body, and powder residue was found on his right hand. Powder burns were also discovered around the entrance wound, which indicates that the fatal shot was fired at close range.”

Ozzie didn’t quite understand the connection, but promised to follow up with the lead detective in Johannesburg.”Do you remember the name of the lead detective in that case?” Ozzie enquired.

“Yes, his surname was Visser, but I don’t recall his rank.”

“That’s fine, I’ll find out,” Ozzie said with a smile.

Ozzie thanked her and told her she could call him at any time if she needed any other information. He left Sarie at the coffee shop to finish the coffee she had ordered.

On Ozzie’s arrival at the Murder and Robbery Unit in Brixton, Joburg, he walked into the typist’s office. He was familiar with these offices, as the Murder and Robbery Unit in Durban often worked in conjunction with the Murder and Robbery Unit in Joburg. This was because violent criminal activities were not restricted to a particular province. It often happened that criminals from Durban would commit crimes in Joburg and vice versa. They would also travel between provinces in an attempt to

evade arrest. He found an overweight middle-aged woman seated behind her computer, and she glanced at him briefly as he entered through her office door. “Good afternoon, “Ozzie said. I’m Inspector de Lange. I’m looking for Visser?”

“Captain Anton Visser,” she said with a smirk on her face.

“Yes, thanks, Captain Visser. Do you know if he’s in?” Ozzie enquired.

Without looking up, this woman said, “Third office on your left down the passage.”

“Thanks,” Ozzie said, as he turned around and walked out, feeling relieved to get her out of his sight. He walked down the dimly lit passage, with doors on either side for as far as he could see.

As he came to the third door on the left, he found it to be closed. He knocked twice. “Yes, enter,” he heard the voice from the other side saw.

Ozzie opened the door and entered, peeping around the door, which stood ajar. He noticed a very tired-looking, overweight man seated behind his desk writing a report.

“Good afternoon, Captain,” he said, as he entered the office. Ozzie was overwhelmed by the smell of cigarette smoke and wondered why all the windows were kept closed, but didn’t say anything out of respect. ”I’m Inspector de Lange from Murder and Robbery, Durban.”

“Yes, how can I help you?” said the overweight Captain.

“I believe you were the lead investigator in the case against Piet Van Rensburg,” Ozzie asked.

The Captain stopped writing and gazed up at Ozzie. “I said, `how I can help you?’” repeated the Captain.

“Can you tell me more about the case against him? I’m investigating a case of a missing boy, and I think there might be a link of some sort,” Ozzie explained.

The Captain stared at Ozzie for a few moments before replying. “What makes you think that? The case went cold years ago after him and his accomplice committed suicide.”

“I believe Piet Van Rensburg shared his secrets with my suspect when they were detained at C Max,” Ozzie said, not wanting to give the Captain more information than necessary, but at the same time, wanting to perk his interest and extract as much information from him as possible.

"I worked the case for many years," he explained, "feeling under a lot of pressure from the provincial head office to solve the case. I worked so fucking hard and came so close, and before I had enough evidence against him, the fucker went and killed himself." Captain Visser explained, not looking up at Ozzie but continued to stare at the report he was compiling.

Ozzie realised that the Captain carried with him a lot of hurt and frustration for not finding the missing children and had borne the burden and guilt with him for many years. This case would possibly haunt him for the rest of his life. Not knowing for sure if the children were dead or alive and not being able to give the parents of the children any answers or closure was his daily nightmare. He had promised the parents, who depended on him, that he would find the children, and he had failed them.

"Captain, please help me to find the boy I'm looking for; tell me what you found out during your investigation; who knows where this could lead." Ozzie pleaded.

Captain Visser looked up at Ozzie and, after giving it some thought, said, "Anything to find your boy, and possibly bring this whole fucking mess to an end." Captain Visser rose from behind his desk and said; "Follow me," as he headed out of his office.

Once Ozzie had walked out of this office, Captain Visser locked the door behind him. Together, they walked down the passage flanked by doors on either side. When they reached the end of the passage, they came across a flight of stairs. Captain Visser started to climb the stairs, followed by Ozzie. After the first flight of stairs, Captain Visser stopped to catch his breath. Ozzie noticed him panting and sweating. He was red in the face.

"Are you alright?" asked the much younger, leaner and fitter Ozzie.

"I'm fine. Just give me a minute," gasped the out-of-breath Captain. Ozzie hoped the wait was going to be worth it.

A while later, they started walking again, this time along the passage on the first floor. They came to a door that opened in two halves like French doors. When they arrived at the half-open door, a uniformed Constable stood to attention and greeted the Captain.

"I would like to draw a filled docket, case number 1454/11/88," the Captain ordered. The Constable obliged and walked back towards the ceiling-high shelves stacked with police

dockets. Ozzie noticed the Constable push a fold-up step ladder closer to the shelves and start climbing the steps. He searched for a while and returned with a case docket and handed it to Captain Visser. He pushed a register closer to Captain Visser and said; “Please sign for it, Captain.”

Captain Visser signed for the docked and told Ozzie that they would go back to his office. After another painstakingly slow walk, they reached Captain Visser’s office. He unlocked the door, and the two of them entered. As Captain Visser sat at his desk, he gave a huge sigh of relief. Captain Visser opened the docket and studied it for a while, trying to familiarise himself with it again. He paged through all the affidavits, which were filed in numerical order, from bottom to top, on the left-hand side of the docket. He decided that this would not be of any assistance to Ozzie at this time, so he turned to the back of the docket, where the investigation diary was filed in numerical order, from top to bottom.

Captain Visser started to read from the investigation diary, while Ozzie took notes:

Piet Van Rensburg
Date of birth: 1952
Classification: serial killer
Characteristics: Paedophile – the bodies were never found
Number of victims: 7
Date of murders: 1998 – 1999
Victims’ profile: Susan Smith (accomplice and lover). Jo Anne Jones aged14, Sue Venter aged 13, Mary Vorster aged 11, Annie Fourie aged 12, Yolande St. Clair aged, 12 and Mary-Lou Potgieter aged 12.
Method of Murder: Unknown
Location: KwaZulu Natal, Balito, South Africa
Status: Committed suicide by gunshot on January 15, 2000

Cornelius Petrus van Rensburg (Piet van Rensburg) was a South African paedophile and serial killer who, together with his partner Susan Smith, abducted and murdered at least six young girls between 1998 and 1999.

Their victims were never found, as the pair committed suicide when faced with arrest after the escape of their last kidnap victim.

Criminal History

Van Rensburg's first crime was theft. He was sent to a reform school in 1968 for stealing a car and rifle, followed by imprisonment in 1970 for stealing motor spares and clothing.

He married, and subsequently fathered six children. He ran a building construction business together with his older brothers.

In 1985, Piet van Rensburg abducted two girls aged 10 and 13, taking them to Buffelsfontein near Pretoria, where he punched them in the face and forced them to strip naked and perform sexual acts on him. Van Rensburg released the girls in Pretoria the following day. He was subsequently arrested and sentenced to four years imprisonment for abduction, sexual assault and common assault of the girls, serving three years before being released.

In September 1989, van Rensburg and his wife Wilhelmina divorced. In 1990, he started dating an attractive-looking divorcee named Susan Smith. The couple holidayed together at God's Window and Balito, on the KwaZulu Natal coast.

Possible victims

- On 1 August 1998, 14-year-old Jo Anne Jones of Krugersdorp near Johannesburg disappeared. She was seen by witnesses climbing into a VW Beetle outside a shopping mall in Krugersdorp. Her brother, who had declined an offer to go with her, was severely guilt-riddled and traumatised by her disappearance. In later life, he was found guilty of murdering an elderly black lady, but the conviction was later overturned.
- On 22 December 1998, thirteen-year-old Sue Venter of Petersburg disappeared. A white Ford Cortina pickup used in her abduction with an advertisement for van Rensburg's building-contracting business on it would later link him to this crime.

- On 7 June 1999, eleven-year-old Mary Vorster of Pretoria disappeared.
- In July 1999, twelve-year-old Annie Fourie of Durban disappeared after being abducted in a shopping mall by a blonde woman. She was later found wandering around in distress but unharmed.
- Some weeks later, twelve-year-old Yolande St. Clair of Benoni disappeared.

Van Rensburg was thought to have used Susan Smith to lure young girls for him. Children's homes reported that she telephoned requesting to bring girls home for the holidays and weekends. At the end of 1998, a 14-year-old girl from an orphanage in the Orange Free State spent the Christmas holidays with the couple. The couple applied to foster the child, but the application was turned down.

- On 22 September 1999, twelve-year-old Mary-Lou Potgieter of Freedom Park disappeared. The same day, twelve-year-old Joan Van Schalkwyk, from Alberton, also in the south of Johannesburg, disappeared.
- On 29 September 1999, Kobus Potgieter, Mary-Lou's father, received a letter from his daughter claiming that she and a friend had run away to Durban with some boys. It is suspected the letter was written under duress.
- On 3 November 1999, Yolande St. Clair, the thirteen-year-old niece of van Rensburg's partner, Susan Smith, disappeared.
- On 11 January 2000, sixteen-year-old Monika Van Vuuren of Pretoria was abducted by Susan Smith in a shopping mall in Pretoria. She was taken to van Rooyen's home in Prestbury Street, Pretoria West, where she was handcuffed, drugged and sexually assaulted before being locked in the cellar. It is likely that van Rooyen thought the small girl was younger than she was, as she managed to escape and alert the police. Police placed the home under surveillance and, four days later, identified van Rensburg when he drove past his house in a white Ford pickup that matched the

description of a vehicle used in one of the abductions. They gave chase, but van Rensburg shot Smith and himself with a high-powered revolver when police closed in on him.

Investigations

All the above disappearances, with the exception of Mary-Lou Potgieter and Jo Anne Jones, were linked by witness statements or forensic evidence to van Rensburg and Smith following their deaths. For example, Sue Venter's home address, phone number and class captain's badge, as well as Mary Vorster's address and home keys, were found in his home.

None of van Rensburg's victims were ever found, despite extensive police searches of his business premises and house (dubbed "The House of Horrors" by the press).

In 2006, the bank donated van Rensburg's former house to the police to allow the girls' disappearance to be investigated further. On 13 May 2006, police systematically demolished the house in a search for new forensic evidence that might provide clues to the girls' fate. The roof was removed and vacuumed for traces of human hair and nails, then the walls were demolished, and the kitchen and main bedroom were scanned with sonar equipment for cavities. The soil in the garden was sifted, and some bones were found, but forensic pathologists identified them as non-human.

In February 2001, Stefaan van Rensburg, Piet van Rensburg's son, was found guilty of perjury in the Pretoria Magistrates Court. He was charged with three counts of perjury after giving police conflicting statement under oath relating to the missing schoolgirls.

On 12 March 2007, renewed interest in the case occurred after a set of adolescent bones were found on the beach near Balito, KwaZulu Natal about 500m away from a holiday resort believed that van Rensburg and Smith are known to have visited. Subsequent DNA testing did not identify any of the van Rensburg victims.

In November 2007, bones were discovered in a property adjacent to van Renburg's house in Pretoria whilst the ground was being dug up to install a swimming pool. Local authorities

were alerted, and investigations are underway to determine if the bones are human, and of the missing girls.

“I received information, about a year ago that the children were still alive,” Captain Visser added. Ozzie sat up and listened with great interest.

”My informant explained that Piet van Rensburg had sold the girls, through a German contact, to buyers in Europe who were unable to have children of their own, and whose adoption applications were unsuccessful. These couples would pay huge sums of money to have a child of their own. Child trafficking is becoming a huge problem throughout the entire world. Children are sold off to those who can’t have children of their own or as sex slaves. Here, we have the problem of young women being brought in from other African countries under the pretext of being offered employment, only to find that when they are here, they become prostitutes. The pimps sell them off for as little as fifty rand a night. These young women become destitute. They have no money of their own, and there is no way for them to return to their home countries. Their pimps give them drugs as payment for sexual favours. They soon become addicted to the drugs and will perform any sex act just for their daily fix. It’s very sad.”

“Anyway, the informant, who is the ex-wife of Piet van Rensburg, told me that she would not testify and would like to remain anonymous, and said that the children were taken out of the country by yacht. She wasn’t sure where the yacht was docked but had an idea the yacht’s name was Princess. I have made enquiries at all the major ports, but have had no positive forthcoming information. The children were taken to Mali, and from there, they were dispersed into Europe. I did contact Interpol and relayed this information to them. I’m still waiting for a response.”

Ozzie was excited by all this information. He now had to positively connect Jan to Piet van Rensburg. He thanked the Captain for all his assistance and promised to be in touch. He drove back to Durban, eager to share this information with his commander.

The following day, Ozzie walked into his commander's office with a big smile on his face. He greeted his commander and sat at his desk with his docket and notepad open.

"Sir, very interesting information I would like to share with you," Ozzie said with excitement in his voice. His commander looked at him in anticipation and sat back in his chair. Ozzie explained everything to him as he went through his notes, step by step. Ozzie paused and looked at his commander, who was staring at him, almost in disbelief.

"Very good detective work, inspector," his commander congratulated. "Now nail that son of a bitch." Ozzie left the commander's office feeling pleased with the compliments. He was determined to nail that bastard and decided it was time to interview Jan.

Ozzie drove to the home of Jan's parents. As he got out of the vehicle, the front door opened, and he noticed Jan's father standing in the doorway.

"Good morning, Detective," Johan said, smiling. "You seem to have a knack for arriving here just as I've put the kettle on. Would you like a cup of coffee?" he offered.

"No thanks, Sir. I have quite a lot to do. Is Jan home?" Ozzie asked. He was eager to start questioning Jan and get to the bottom of his son's disappearance.

"Yes, I'm sure he's still in his room. Just a minute, I'll give him a shout," the old man said as he turned around and walked back into to the house. A while later, Jan came to the door. It looked as if he had just woken up and got out of bed.

"Morning, Jan. My name is Detective Inspector Ozzie de Lange from the Murder and Robbery Unit. I'm investigating the disappearance of your son, Michael," Ozzie explained. Jan seemed confused that the Murder and Robbery Unit was investigating the disappearance and not the Detective Branch's enquiry staff but nodded his head anyway.

"Yes, how can I help you?" enquired Jan, trying to stay calm.

"Please get dressed. There are some questions I would like to ask you at our offices."

"Am I under arrest?" Jan asked with a quiver in his voice.

"No, not at all. Not yet, anyway. I just need some clarity," Ozzie said with authority.

"Okay, just give me a few minutes."

Jan sat in the back of the car as Ozzie drove. They didn't say a word to each other for the entire thirty-minute trip to the unit. As they walked into Ozzie's office, Jan heard Ozzie lock the door behind him. He suggested that Jan take a seat, as this might take a while.

Jan sat on the hard chair in front of Ozzie's desk, while Ozzie sat on his comfortable, well-padded chair. He opened his notepad and took hold of his pen. "Tell me, Jan., I understand that you and Michael had gone to the beach on the day of his disappearance. Is that right?" Ozzie asked as he wrote the question on his notepad.

"Yes, that's right. We don't see each other much, and I wanted to spend time with him." Jan explained.

"You intended to spend the entire day on the beach," Ozzie asked.

"Yes, with the exception of getting the occasional ice cream or cold drink from the mall," Jan said with confidence.

"I read your affidavit you made to the uniformed officer on that day. I assume that you read the affidavit and took the oath, before signing it, so everything you said was true?" asked Ozzie.

"Yes, I went for a drink, and when I came back, he was missing. Everything I said was the truth," Jan said confidently.

"Tell me, Jan, why was Michael wearing jeans if you knew the two of you would be spending the day on the beach?" Ozzie asked, looking him straight in the eye.

Jan suddenly felt sweat accumulate on his brow, and his mouth went dry.

"Well," Jan explained; "If we go to the mall, I would expect him to be well dressed," was the only explanation Jan could offer.

"On a hot day you expect your nine-year-old boy to play on the beach in jeans?" Ozzie asked again.

"Well, yes, he didn't have short pants to wear," Jan stuttered.

"You didn't think of getting him a pair of shorts at the mall? How do you expect him to swim in jeans?"

Jan didn't answer.

"Are you prepared to take a polygraph? If you have nothing to hide, I'm sure you will not object. Also, by undertaking a polygraph test, you could exclude yourself as a suspect."

Jan refused to submit to a polygraph test and said that no one would believe him in any event as he was an ex-convict.

"If you have nothing to hide, why refuse the polygraph test? People need to know," Ozzie instructed.

But Jan knew his rights and knew that a polygraph test had no evidential value and was only an aid in the investigation of crime.

"Tell me about Piet Van Rensburg. Do you know him?"

Jan swallowed at the sound of that name "Umm, let me think, Piet van Rensburg, you said?" Jan asked, trying to buy time to think of how he was going to respond.

"Yes, Piet van Rensburg." Ozzie replied with irritation in his voice.

"Wow, let me think. I've met so many people in my life. I can't remember them all," Jan sat thinking of what to say. Eventually, he broke the silence and shook his head. "No, sorry. That name doesn't ring a bell," he answered.

"What would you say if I told you that you spent time with him in C Max?" Ozzie asked, with his pen in hand.

"Inspector, I spent time with many guys there. As you might know, I was locked up for six years," Jan explained, trying desperately to avoid that line of questioning.

"Tell me about the Princess," Ozzie said.

"Princess who?" Jan asked, feeling more uncomfortable now.

Ozzie didn't reply. He now did not doubt that Jan was lying and was involved in his own son's disappearance. Ozzie was hesitant to divulge any more information. He thought it would be best to arrest him and let him stew over what Ozzie had asked him.

Jan was charged with defeating the ends of Justice for his statement regarding Michael's disappearance.

Later that day, Ozzie received a call from Sarie. She told Ozzie that she needed to accept that Michael was dead, although his body had not been found, which gave her a glimpse of hope. She did not doubt in her mind that Jan was involved in Michael's disappearance. She ended the conversation by saying that justice would be done.

Jan was released on R3000 bail, and the matter was remanded to 24 February for further investigation. On 17 October, Sarie contacted Ozzie to find out the progress of his investigation. She said that it was Michael's birthday and didn't know how she was going to get through it. "I don't know if my child goes to bed hungry and cold at night. I will believe he is alive until I see his little dead body."

That evening, Jan walked to the mall and phoned Carl Schmidt. "Carl. It's Jan," he said into the phone with a panic quiver in his voice. "I need to see you urgently. There's big shit. I think the cops are onto us. Where can I meet you?" Jan asked.

There was silence on the other end for a while before Carl came back on the phone. "Meet me on the fishing pier on main beach in an hour," Carl said and he replaced the receiver.

Jan called the taxi and waited at the main entrance of the mall. Within forty-five minutes, Jan was on the pier at the main beach. He waited in the wind for Carl to arrive. He just stared at the sea, wondering what he should do. Surrendering was not an option. There was no way in hell he was going back to prison.

A while later, he noticed a large man dressed in a long dark coat and hat approaching him. As the man grew closer, he recognised it was Carl. Neither man greeted, both their faces filled with fear.

Jan started before Carl could ask what the problem was. "The cops picked me up today. The Murder and Robbery Unit is investigating Michael's disappearance," Jan explained, running short of breath as he spoke.

"Your shit is your shit, you deal with it. Just leave me out of it," Carl said abruptly. "It's not that simple Carl. They know about the Princess." Carl's face turned white in the ice-cold wind.

"Oh Fuck! What did you say?" enquired an increasingly nervous Carl.

"I said nothing, don't worry," Jan assured. "But Carl, you can be sure they're looking for you. I don't have to smell shit to know it's shit. I need to get out of here. There's no way I'm going back to prison." Jan was getting more anxious and desperate as he spoke.

"Yes, we will leave at sunrise tomorrow. Meet me at the Princess," Carl instructed. The meeting was short and over, and both men went their separate ways.

When Jan arrived at the Four Seasons Hotel where he was staying, he sat on the edge of the bed with a double scotch in hand. He needed to get away. The cops were all over him like a rash. Jan gulped the whiskey and lay on his bed, thinking about what Ozzie had asked him. Nerves were burning his stomach, but he knew he had to sleep somehow. He wasn't sure what lay ahead for him, but knew that he had to get away. It was just a matter of time before Inspector de Lange came for him. Jan got out of bed without being able to fall asleep. It irritated him that he lay in bed and tossed from side to side, with a thousand thoughts going through his mind, and not being able to sleep. He phoned for a taxi. When Jan stepped outside, he felt the cold wind on his face, which he didn't really mind as it woke him up and felt refreshing. A while later, he noticed a taxi approaching. He waved the taxi down and got in with his single bag.

As he approached the jetty, he noticed Carl walking towards his yacht. It was still dark, but Jan estimated the sun would peek over the horizon within a half hour.

He climbed out of the taxi and ran along the jetty toward Carl, who was carrying a much heavier frame. "Carl, Carl," he called as he ran toward him, but Carl just continued to walk. They arrived at the Princess at the same time. Carl led the way up the gangplank.

Without saying a word, the two men walked down to the lounge area, where they had left their bags. "Soon, the sun will rise," Carl said. "I would like to be out of the harbour before sunrise. You untie the ropes, and I'll start the engines," Carl instructed.

Both men hurried and went separate ways. Soon, Jan could hear the roar of the diesel engines as they started. He untied the ropes which secured the Princess to the dock, and the yacht started to move. Within about thirty minutes, the yacht reached full speed and headed out of the harbour towards the sea.

"Where are we going?" Jan asked, but there was no reply. Carl was obviously not in the mood to make conversation. He just wanted to get the hell out of there. Jan sat on the deck as the Yacht sped forward.

The sunrise over the sea was spectacular, and the air was crisp and clear. Still, Carl didn't say a word. He maintained his station and steered the yacht, which was in full sail now; with the sails flapping high above them, they moved swiftly forward at a remarkable pace.

After about two hours Jan heard Carl shout from his station; "There are tins of baked beans in the cupboard if you're hungry."

"Thanks. Maybe later," Jan shouted back above the sound of the wind.

The day went by without much being said. Still Jan wondered where they were heading.

As night fell, Carl came down and said to Jan, "You sleep there and pointed to a sofa which opened up as a bed.

"Where are we heading, Carl?" Jan enquired again.

"Dar es Salaam, Tanzania," Carl replied bluntly. "There, you will be met by Stephan, who will take you further north by vehicle." They fell asleep early that night, both feeling relief and quite tired from the lack of sleep over the past twenty-four hours.

Two days later, they arrived at Dar es Salam. Jan was shocked to see how commercialised the city was, how bad it smelled and the conditions under which people there were living. Poverty was striking, although the fish trade was prevalent in the harbour and appeared to be the main source of income for many. The noise was deafening, and the fish smell was nauseating, but if this was just a brief stopover, he could handle it, he thought.

They walked to a beachfront hotel where Jan was introduced to Stephan. After a quick drink, they parted ways, and Stephan led Jan to his vehicle, which was in the hotel's parking lot. As they drove, Stephan told Jan that he was taking him to Utunga River Lodge. Greta had arranged for him to spend the night there, and after that, he was on his own.

Being in a strange country whilst evading arrest didn't seem like such a bad idea, but being there without any money was a nightmare. The thought of how he was going to survive sent shivers down his spine. He would have to do whatever it takes to get by.

He and Stephan spent the night at the lodge before Stephan set off again. He said that he had to meet with potential buyers from Canada in Zambia.

Jan asked the friendly lady at the reception desk how far the nearest town was from there, and she politely explained that it was the town of Morogoro, about a hundred and fifty kilometres from where they were.

"Shit," Jan said to himself and headed towards the front entrance with his backpack over his shoulder. He would have to hustle hard to survive. He stood a better chance of surviving in a big town than here in the sticks.

Jan walked to the main road and started to hitchhike. Taxis passed him, old dilapidated vehicles passed him, and even trucks passed him, but nobody stopped.

After about three hours in the pelting sun, Jan noticed a single horse-drawn, homemade cart approach him. The driver smiled as he passed Jan. Jan decided that a lift on a horse-drawn cart was better than nothing, so he waved the driver down. The driver pulled at the reigns, bringing the exhausted horse to a halt. Jan smiled at the driver as he climbed onto the cart.

"Morogoro?' Jan asked with a smile. The driver didn't reply but merely nodded and smiled, showing his few white teeth against his very dark skin.

Jan rode on the cart until late that afternoon. They arrived in a very small dusty town, with a single road through it. He noticed two old, unmaintained buildings, one on either side of the road. One had a Pepsi sign on the roof, and the other had a Taco fuel sign in front of it. The driver stopped his cart, and indicated that he should carry on with the road and that his lift had come to an end.

Jan looked around to see if any other transport was heading his way, but there was nothing.

Evening was falling quickly now, and soon it would be dark. He walked towards the shop with the Pepsi sign on the roof. At least it was still open. Jan noticed pedestrians entering and leaving the shop with their groceries on their heads. Also, the shop front was roofed. Jan thought that if all else failed, he would sleep under cover. Jan stood at the door and greeted the people who entered

the shop, hoping somebody would show some pity on him, but that didn't happen.

At closing time, the shop owner, an elderly Pakistani man came to lock the door. He noticed Jan standing outside and asked him what he wanted. Jan explained that he was trying to get to Morogoro. The Pakistani realised from Jan's accent that he was a foreigner in this country, and pitied him. He told Jan that he could get a lift with his son, who worked at the shop, and lived in Morogoro. Jan thanked him and showed his gratitude by shaking his hand. The Pakistani smiled and said, "Shalom."

Jan waited outside, not knowing what else to do. About thirty minutes later, Jan noticed an old Peugeot pull up in front of the shop. The young driver leaned over, opened the passenger window, and beckoned to Jan to get it. Jan smiled and obliged.

They didn't talk much along their journey, as it soon became evident that the language gap between them was too great to make a decent conversation, and when he did speak, Jan didn't quite understand him with his heavy accent.

An hour or so later, they arrived in Morogoro. Jan was surprised at the size of the town. It was more the size of a small city. Although it was reasonably late, some shops were still open. People milled around as everyone went about their own business. Vendors still sat alongside the main roads, trying to make a last sale for the day. The driver, in his broken English, told Jan that they had reached their destination and pulled the vehicle to the side of the road. Jan thanked him by shaking his hand, and he, too, said "Shalom" as he exited the vehicle.

Jan walked around the streets of Morogoro, not knowing what to expect next. He came across a bar with its doors wide open. The music inside was loud, and people spoke loudly over the sound of the music. Jan needed a drink but knew he didn't have any money. Going inside and trying to hustle a drink would only draw attention to himself, which was the last thing he wanted.

Jan stood near the entrance and looked around at the hustle and bustle when he noticed a 250cc Honda motorcycle standing opposite the street. He looked at this motorcycle, hoping nobody had noticed him staring at it. His mind started to race. He knew how to hot wire a bike. He had done that before, although it was many years ago, whilst he was still at school. The

principles remained the same, the thought. He removed his pocket knife from his pocket and started to undo the right-hand side cover. Within a minute, the side cover was off. Jan looked from side to side nervously whilst dismantling the cover. Only three screws held the cover in place. He connected the positive wire from the ignition to the positive wire on the coil, and he heard the engine start. Jan quickly climbed on the motorbike and sped off, leaving the side cover on the ground where the motorbike had been parked.

Jan wasn't sure if the fuel gauge was working, but would deal with the fuel issue later. Right now, he needed to put distance between himself and this place. Jan had to get as far from Morogoro as he possibly could and as quickly as he possibly could. Jan decided to head west for Kenya.

As he rode along the main road, he came across a road sign which read Nairobi 623 km, Mombasa 379 km. Jan decided to head for Mombasa as it was closer than Nairobi. As he rode through the night, Jan was pleased to see that the fuel gauge was working and that the motorbike was full of petrol when he stole it.

Jan was cautious not to hit a stray wild animal as he was not wearing a helmet, and the collision could be fatal. He rode for hours with only the company of the engine roar in his ears until he was finally nearing Mombasa. His fuel was running low, and he needed a rest. Jan decided not to drive the motorbike hard and to conserve fuel.

The sky started to become light in the east, and Jan realised that within an hour, he would be facing the day. In the distance, he saw the lights of Mombasa and realised that he was nearly there. The bike was hot, and Jan was tired, but he had to get to civilisation.

An hour later, as the sun peeped over the mountains, Jan rode into Mombasa. What a relief he made it, he thought. He parked the bike on the main road and got off. The city was already bustling with taxis, trucks and a few cars. He stretched and admired the city and the Victorian architecture with its fountains. He stood there and wondered how he would get money to continue on his journey. Mombasa was too busy with too many police. It would just be a matter of time before he was

arrested and deported. Here in Mombasa, he would stick out like a sore thumb.

While riding through the main street, Jan noticed a sign that stated, `Lake Victoria 441 km.' Jan thought for a while and realised that a lodge somewhere quiet in Lake Victoria would be an ideal hiding place. He rode until he reached the last filling station before leaving town. He stopped next to the pump and soon was approached by the attendant. Jan remained seated on the bike and ordered the attendant to fill the bike with premium petrol. The attendant obliged and filled the tank. As he was replacing the hose on the pump, Jan sped off, leaving the attendant shouting and waving his arms behind him. Jan didn't look back; instead, he drove at full speed until he reached the main road.

He followed the road sign and turned left towards Lake Victoria. Jan arrived at Lake Victoria around midday. He didn't feel so good. He was hungry and fatigued. He decided to find a park where he would lie in the cool shade of some trees and have a nap. Jan rode around until he came across a park on the outskirts of the town. Exhaustedly, he reached a quiet, shady area. The grass was lush and cool. Jan collapsed on the grass next to the motorbike. He used his backpack as a pillow, and within seconds, he fell fast asleep.

Jan woke cold and hungry as the sun was setting. He felt miserable and wasn't sure what to do. After giving his situation some thought, he decided that he needed to call Greta. After all, he was sure that by this time, she had been paid for Michael.

Jan rode out of town for about ten kilometres until he came across a signboard indicating Vuma Lodge to the left. He was relieved to see the sign and smiled to himself. Jan rode on the gravel road until he reached the lodge, which was well hidden between trees and natural vegetation. Jan walked into the lodge, where he met an attractive twenty-something receptionist. She smiled at him as he entered through the front door. The building was rather old, he thought, and the furniture and décor were outdated. It seemed comfortable, and Jan liked the fact that they didn't appear to be busy, as there was nobody else in sight.

"A room for the night, with an *en-suite* shower and telephone, please," he asked in a weary voice.

"Yes, sure," replied the pretty lady with a beautiful smile, and handed him the keys to room number ten. "Down the passage on your left," she said as she started to complete an attendance register.

"Sorry sir, under what name can I make the reservation?" she asked still smiling, but Jan didn't notice as he had already started down the passage.

He replied back at her and over his shoulder; "John Slivers."

"Thank you, Mr Slivers," she called back. Jan smiled at himself, wondering how he had come up with that name.

He continued down the passage until he reached room ten. He unlocked the door and walked in. Jan was pleasantly surprised at the neatness and simplicity of the room. There was a single bed with a small coffee table in the corner. A small television set was mounted to the wall opposite the bed.

Jan undressed and walked into a simple but effective shower. He stood under the hot water for about ten minutes, thinking of the events of the past forty-eight hours. He got out of the shower and felt like a new man. He dressed and took a seat on the bed.

He dialled the reception. The pretty young girl answered the phone after only two rings. "How can I help, Mr Slivers?" she asked in that cute voice of hers.

Jan thought of asking her if she would join him in the room but thought that might be inappropriate. "Am I too late for dinner?" he asked.

"The kitchen closes in thirty minutes," she replied. "What would you like for dinner?" She asked.

Jan was too tired to think, so all he said was; "You surprise me." He heard her giggle at the other end before replacing the receiver.

Jan lay on his back, staring at the ceiling. He thought about how things had turned out for him and couldn't believe his luck.

He decided that it was time to call Greta. He opened his leather-bound diary and looked up her number. He raised the receiver to his ear and dialled her number. It took a while to start ringing, and then Jan realised that he was in another country.

Greta finally answered the phone. When Jan spoke, she said, “Hullo Jan, is that you? The line is very faint. You’ll have to speak up.”

“Hullo Greta, Yes, it's Jan. How are you?” he asked with a slightly raised voice.

“I’m fine, thanks. Where are you? It sounds like you’re on the other end of the world.”

“Greta, listen,” Jan said. “I’m in trouble. I’m in Kenya. I need your help. The police are investigating Michael’s disappearance. Carl brought me to Dar es Salaam by yacht. Then I met Stephan, who took me to a lodge. I’ve now crossed over into Kenya. Please, Greta, I’m asking for your help. I have no money. What has happened to Michael?” Jan asked anxiously.

“I don’t want you coming back here now. It’s too risky,“ she said. “How much do you need?” she asked.

I’m staying at the Vuma Lodge in Lake Victoria,” he explained. “How long do you want me to stay there for?”

She said that she would pay for his lodging for a month. He had to phone her in the morning with the banking details. She sounded worried and quickly replaced the receiver. The phone went dead.

Jan lay on the bed again, thinking about what he would do in this place for the next month, when there was a knock at the door. “Yes, come in,” Jan called.

The pretty receptionist opened his door and entered with a tray containing a plate of Macaroni and cheese. She placed it on the table, smiled at him, and left.

Jan was so hungry that he could quite easily have eaten two plates of macaroni and cheese. He sat at his small table and enjoyed his meal. Soon, he was tired and was looking forward to having a good night’s sleep. He sat on the edge of his bed and opened his diary, in which he recorded all that had happened and the places he had been. Jan fell asleep peacefully and slept until mid-morning the following day.

He rose to a beautiful day. Only now could he experience the beauty of the lodge. Nestled in the bush, he looked out of his bedroom windows and realised he was surrounded by dense bush.

`This,’ he thought, `was the perfect hide-out.’

He walked along the passage to the lobby area with a bounce in his step. He was so overjoyed that everything was working out well for him that he wanted to start whistling a tune. He decided to skip breakfast and go for a walk in the surrounding bush. Jan exited the lodge through the back door and noticed a pathway leading through the dense bush. `This looks interesting,' he thought as he walked along the pathway, listening to the sound of the birds and breathing in the crisp, fresh air.

Jan continued to walk along the trail for about two kilometres until he came across a waterfall. He loved it so much here that he wished his stay would never end. Jan sat on the rocks at the water's edge and absorbed everything around him.

He was at total peace with himself and the world. The sun was high in the sky when Jan stood up and decided to amble back to the lodge.

On his arrival at the lodge, he went to the reception desk, where he again met the pretty young receptionist. He was greeted by her friendly smile again.

"Did you sleep well, Mr Slivers?" she enquired.

"Yes, thank you," he replied, returning a smile.

Jan explained that he was enjoying the serenity and tranquillity of the lodge so much that he wanted to stay for a month, to which the young receptionist said, "Of course. It would be our absolute pleasure having you here."

Jan requested the lodge's banking details and told her that funds would be transferred electronically into their account. She obliged and smiled again.

Jan proceeded to his room, telephoned Greta, and gave her the banking details. She promised to make the transfer during the day. Jan realised that he was bound to stay at the lodge, and he dared not ride into Lake Victoria for fear that he might be arrested for petrol theft. He used his time to go for walks, lay on his bed and read, and just relax, waiting for the month to go by.

Inspector Ozzie de Lange was piecing together the puzzle. He decided to pay the Port Captain a visit. On his arrival at the Port Captain's office, Ozzie was directed to an upstairs office that overlooked the harbour. He was greeted by a skinny man with a grey beard who should be relaxing at home enjoying his pension

years. He greeted the captain by shaking his hand and introduced himself.

Ozzie explained to the captain that he was investigating a case of kidnapping involving a young boy and needed his assistance. The captain looked at Ozzie with a puzzled expression. Ozzie asked him about a yacht named `Princess'. The captain walked behind another desk and opened a docking register. He paged through the register, which recorded all yachts docked in the harbour.

"Here it is," he said. "Dock number three."

Ozzie's face lit up with excitement. "How long has the yacht been docking here?" Ozzie asked.

Again the port captain paged through the resister. "Since 1998," the captain answered.

Ozzie could hardly contain his excitement at the news. "Captain, can you tell me who the owner of the yacht is?" Ozzie asked as he made notes of their conversation. The port captain closed the register and walked over to a shelf which contained other arch lever files. He looked at the files before finding the file he was looking for. He reached up and removed the file from the shelf, and placed it on the table next to him. He again paged through the file until he came across the details of the Princess.

"Here we are," he said without looking at Ozzie. "The yacht belongs to a Carl Schmidt."

Ozzie couldn't believe his luck. "Do you have an address for this Carl Schmidt," Ozzie enquired.

The captain continued to search through the file and came across the address. "Yes, here it is. The last known address we have on record is flat number 1044 John Rolf House, Durban."

Ozzie knew exactly where John Rolf House was. It was a very high block of flats overlooking the harbour. The captain didn't express the same excitement and probably felt that his job was mundane and boring, but he just needed a few more years of service before he could enjoy his pension.

"Captain, one more thing before I go, please," Ozzie said. "Can you tell me who pays the docking fees?"

The captain didn't have much interest but knew he was compelled to assist the police in any way regarding port and harbour-related matters. He walked over to another shelf, being followed by a visibly excited Ozzie. He removed a financial file

from a shelf on a desk and paged through it. When he came to dock three, he stopped and inspected the computer printout that had been kept on record.

"The payments were made via a debit order from a bank account held in Cape Town under the name of G. Blettner," The captain said as he stood straight up. He hoped that this was the last of the questions, as he wanted to return to his desk to continue with his tasks.

"Sorry, Captain, I just thought of it," Ozzie said before the captain could be sidetracked. "Is there a record of when the Princess leaves the harbour and when she returns?" he asked.

The captain sighed at the thought of having to go through yet another register. Without answering, he walked over to his desk and opened his computer. He typed in the name of the yacht and its registration. Up popped all the dates and times of when the yacht entered and left the harbour. He tore off the computer printout and handed it to Ozzie, who accepted it with gratitude. Ozzie left the captain's office, wanting to run to his car.

Ozzie sat behind his desk and studied the computer printout. It went back to the time when the Princess was first docked in the harbour. He noticed that the Princess left the harbour quite often in 1988, 89, 90 up to 1993 and then again in 1999. Every time she left the harbour, she would stay out for six days before returning to the docks again.

The yacht had not left the harbour for years, until recently. He looked closely at the printout and noticed that the Princess left the harbour a day after Michael's disappearance. Ozzie felt the blood drain from his face when he read this. He looked closely at the last entry and noticed that the Princess had left the harbour six days ago and had returned last night. He needed to meet with this Carl Schmidt urgently.

Ozzie needed answers. He removed his nine-millimetre Beretta pistol from his top drawer and tucked it into his trousers, behind his back.

Ozzie parked his car in the parking lot and walked into the John Ralf building. He pressed the elevator button. He waited for the elevator before entering through the automatic doors. Ozzie pressed the button for the tenth floor. He was filled with excitement and had butterflies in his stomach.

Ozzie loved this part of his job. He loved the excitement, the adrenaline rush and the feeling that he had got his man. It was such a rewarding feeling to know that the perpetrator had been outwitted and would have to face him in court. Ozzie didn't do this for the pay, which was really crappy, but for the excitement and pleasure it gave him to see justice being done.

The elevator doors opened as it reached the tenth floor, and Ozzie stepped out into the corridor. He walked until he reached flat 1044 and stopped at the door. He removed his pistol from his trousers, stood slightly to the side of the door, and knocked.

"Mr Schmidt, this is the police. Open the door," Ozzie commanded.

He listened closely but couldn't hear any sound inside. He knocked again and repeated that Carl Schmidt should open and that he was from the police. The door suddenly flung open, and to Ozzie's surprise, a large man came running straight at him.

He used his weight advantage to knock Ozzie off balance, and he fell to the floor. The large frame man ran down the corridor to a fire escape door.

By the time Ozzie stood up and ran toward the fire escape, the large framed man was out of sight.

Ozzie was surprised at the speed he could run, and decided to run up the stairs, believing Carl Schmidt was heading for the roof.

When Ozzie arrived at the roof, he noticed the door had been left ajar. He ran out onto the roof, hoping to apprehend Carl, but saw Carl run to the side and throw himself over the edge.

Carl's huge body had landed in the parking area, and as Ozzie looked at him from the roof, it was clear that he was dead. Nobody could survive a fall from that height.

After recovering from the shock and disappointment of Carl's suicide, Ozzie decided that it was time to interview Jan again. A week had passed since his last interview with Jan, and Jan had not come back to him. He had hoped that by now Jan had given some thought to what he had told him and that Jan would've come back with something to say by now, but there had been nothing.

Ozzie drove to Jan's parent's home. Jan's mother met him on his arrival. His father was obviously out fishing or passing his time as he wished.

"Good morning, ma'am," Ozzie greeted her when she opened the front door. Ozzie noticed a visible change in her compared to the friendly lady he had met on his first visit to their home. She appeared to be less friendly and less cheerful. "Could I speak to Jan? Please?" he asked politely.

"He is not here," is all she said in reply.

"Do you know when he'll be back or maybe where I could find him?" Ozzie enquired.

"Jan hasn't been home in days, and I'm worried sick. His clothes and his bag are also gone. He must have left, but I can't understand why he had not even said goodbye. He simply left during the night, without saying a word to us. I still can't believe what has happened. First, it was Michael, and now Jan," she said with a tear in her eye.

Ozzie's heart dropped at the news that Jan was gone. `Where could he have run to?' Ozzie wondered. He was sure he didn't go back to Pretoria. Jan would know that his Sarie would be looking for him over Michael's disappearance.

He asked Jan's mother to contact him and ask if she could tell him where he could be. He thanked her for her time. He wished that he could tell her that everything would be alright, but he couldn't. Ozzie simply nodded his head as he turned and walked to his car.

By the third day, Jan felt like dying. He had broken out in a fever and was sweating constantly. He wasn't eating and felt like boiled crap. He just lay on his bed, not wanting to see anyone. He had placed a bucket beside his bed and was vomiting constantly. His headache pounded, and his body was shaking uncontrollably. He developed diarrhoea. His stool was bloody, and he thought he was going to die. Jan knew that he could not see a doctor, for fear of being recognised. He was sure that by this time, his identity had been circulated and that Interpol would be on the lookout for him.

He decided that while he had the strength, he should go to Cape Town. `That', he thought, `was the safest place for him to be, and with Greta's help, he could get medical attention.' Jan

packed his bag again and left under the cover of night. He had enough petrol in the tank to get him to the next town, at least. He had no money but decided that when he needed to refuel, he would ride off without paying, just as he had done in Lake Victoria.

It took Jan four days to reach South Africa; each day, he became weaker, but he was determined to get to Cape Town. Each time he had to refuel, he identified a filling station with an easy getaway.

Jan entered South Africa through Zimbabwe and then the Beit Bridge border post. Once he was through the border, he sighed a sigh of relief; nobody suspected anything. He decided to travel on the N1 to Joburg, then down to Durban and along the N2 to Cape Town. He became weaker every day, but his determination to reach his destiny drove him on.

He would sleep in the bush on the side of the road and eat road kill if he had to. His only objective was to get to Cape Town.

By the time Jan reached Port Elizabeth, his strength was completely depleted. He was dehydrated and was hallucinating. He needed fuel and came across a filling station situated along the national road. Jan stopped at the pump but could hardly keep his balance. His speech had become so slurred that the petrol attendant couldn't make out what he was saying. Jan tried to repeat what he had said but collapsed, unable to support his motorbike, and his motorbike fell on top of him. The attendant helped him up, steadied him and filled the bike. Again, as the attendant replaced the hose, Jan sped off at high speed.

When Jan reached Knysna, he couldn't hold on any longer. He slowed down as he passed through the town and tried desperately to stay on the bike, but his efforts were in vain, and he collapsed, the bike falling on top of him.

In July, a gravely ill man was admitted to the Livingstone Hospital in Port Elizabeth. On his admission, his name was stated as Dominic Garcia of Dar es Salaam. The man was in a coma, but in a worn black briefcase, they found personal documents indicating that he was involved in Tanzania in the United Nations Food Aid Program. Strangely enough, there was no passport. The local police were contacted to trace Garcia's movements. The local detectives contacted the United Nations in Dar es Salaam

via diplomatic channels because, in the event of Garcia's death, the body would need to be identified. In Dar es Salaam, colleagues in the United Nations were dumbfounded to hear that one of their staff members was ill in South Africa. As far as they knew, he was in good health and on holiday. A UN official, Sergio Beretta, left for Port Elizabeth.

At the patient's bedside, Beretta said he knew the man in the bed. He was not Dominic Garcia, but Ian, an Australian whom he had met in Dar es Salaam. Ian looked after Dominic's house when he went on holiday. Beretta recognised Dominic's motorbike, complete with his legal registration documents.

Captain Nortje, who was the detective branch commander at Jeffrey's Bay, decided to interview Dirk Van Heerden, who discovered the motorcyclist lying on the road with the motorcycle on top of him with the engine still running.

Mr Van Heerden told Captain Nortje that he was from Humansdorp. He and his wife were on their way to Cape Town on holiday, when they came across a man who had collapsed in the road. The motorbike he was driving had fallen on top of him. He could barely speak and was too weak to move the motorbike off himself. Van Heerden asked the man his name and had to go close up to him to make out that he said his name was Dominic Garcia.

Van Heerden called for an ambulance, and Dominic Garcia was taken to the Livingstone Hospital. Captain Nortje had a picture of Jan Steyn, as it had been circulated to all police stations around the country. Jan had a visible scar above his right eye. Captain Nortje went to Livingstone Hospital with the picture of Jan. Even though Jan was much thinner than he was in the photo, the scar above his right eye was unmistakable.

Ozzie was notified of Jan's admission, and he immediately went to interview Jan in the hospital in Port Elizabeth.

On his arrival he was shocked to see the condition Jan was in. He was still in the Intensive Care Unit. Jan was pale, thin and still in a state of unconsciousness.

Ozzie realised that he would not be able to question him. Ozzie had no doubts that they had finally arrested Jan Steyn. Hopefully, he will be able to solve the mystery of Michael's disappearance. Jan was in the Intensive Care Unit on life support.

The doctor on duty told Ozzie that the patient had contracted malaria and his condition could be described as critical. His heartbeat had stopped once, and tests showed his kidneys to be affected. They battled to keep Jan alive.

Ozzie knew that Jan held the key to Michael's disappearance, and if he died, the last hope of finding Michael would also die. He was unable to move his body and slipped in and out of consciousness. Ozzie walked over to where Jan lay.

He leaned over and spoke into Jan's ear and said loudly; "Jan." Immediately, Jan's left eye flickered, and Ozzie knew that Jan had heard him. He might very well not be able to move his body, but he could move his left eyelid.

"Jan. Do you want me to contact your parents? If `yes', blink once. If `no', blink twice. Ozzie kept his face close to Jan's face and looked for any reaction. Suddenly, Jan blinked once.

"Good, I'll do that. Is Michael still alive?" Again, Ozzie focused on Jan's left eye, awaiting a response. Jan blinked once and fell into a state of unconsciousness.

The doctor told Ozzie that his patient could have gone into a state of shock and that he was not sure for how long he would remain in this condition. Ozzie opened the tattered black briefcase, searching for anything that might lead him to Michael. He feverishly sought leads and grasped at every straw to trace Michael.

At the bottom of the bag, he came across a white leather-bound King James Bible, which he opened and started to read. `Any clue would be better than none,' Ozzie thought. The Bible was full of annotations and texts that Jan had underlined. He had underlined, in red, 1 Corinthians 7:10 and 11.

"And unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: But and if she departs, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. But and if she departs let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled with her husband and let not the husband put away his wife.'

Ozzie continued to examine the Bible for any clues. He waited for Jan to regain consciousness. There was so much more he needed to ask Jan, but Jan didn't regain consciousness again that day. With the help of an atlas found in the briefcase, Ozzie tried to retrace his steps.

It appeared they left Durban on a yacht shortly after his disappearance, after his arrest and court appearance the previous year. He seemed to land in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania and then made his way to Mombasa. He made his way inland to Vol and then through the Tsavo Park across the Tsavo River. The railway bridge across the river was the place where two large Tsavo lions led a reign of terror among railway workers in 1989. The lions killed 140 railway workers before they were shot. Books have been written, and even a movie has been made about this catastrophy. Jan was no tourist. His mission took him to Nairobi and from there north to Lokitaung to the convergence of Kenyan, Ethiopian and Sudanese borders. There, near the west bank of Lake Turkana, he stayed over. In his notes, he called the lake by its old colonial name, Lake Rudolf. Then he went south to Lodwar, and from there in an easterly direction around the southern tip of Turkana and down into an area around Mount Kenya, Africa's second highest mountain after Mount Kilimanjaro. Jan referred to Mount Kenya as Kiriyanga, the Kikuru name for it.

On his month's travels through Kenya, Jan met Ian McCall, a water engineer who worked for an aid organisation, Food for the Hungry. He and McCall often travelled together to the dry parts of Marsabit. He stole an identity document from McCall and departed for the southern part of Kenya, which he crossed at Tanga as Ian Mc Call. From there, he travelled along the coast to Dar es Salaam, where he befriended Dominic Garcia. When Garcia went on holiday, Jan stole his motorbike and headed south. He crossed the border into Mozambique at Mtara, and from there, he travelled further south down the coast through Nampula, Beira, Xai-Xai and over the border into South Africa. The malaria had already taken hold of him. He still needed to travel thousands of kilometres on the bike, exposed to the elements through Swaziland, St Lucia, Durban, Umtata, East London, Port Elizabeth, and Humansdorp near Knysna, when he could go no further.

Jan's travels through three African countries, especially Kenya, troubled Ozzie. Why for so long? Was Michael with him when he went to Mombasa? Worse still, did Jan's visits to these African countries have anything to do with the disappearance of other children? Ozzie was unable to ask Jan these questions, so

he took the Bible in search of any other clues. Most annotations were in the book of Joshua.

Ozzie contacted Sarie to give her an update on his investigation; that Jan was in critical condition in the Livingstone Hospital in Port Elizabeth. For the first time, Sarie acknowledged that in a fit of rage, shortly after the disappearance of Michael, Jan told her that he had sold the boy and he would never be seen again. During this fit of rage, Jan told Sarie that he would also dispose of her if she remained so persistent and blamed her for Michael's disappearance. He threatened to destroy her parents, who also lived on the coast. Sarie asked the court for an interdict to prohibit him from harassing her. Several warrants for Jan's arrest were issued after that.

Ozzie read carefully what Jan had handwritten about the `cities of refuge,' and in Joshua 20, Jan quoted from several verses: "*Appoint out for you cities of refuge that the slayer killeth any person, unawares and unwittingly may flee thither: and they shall be your refuge from the avenger of blood. And when he doth flee unto those cities shall stand at the entering gate of that city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them. And if the avenger of blood pursue after him, then they shall deliver the slayer up into his hand: because he smote his neighbour unwittingly. Then shall the slayer return and come into his own city, and unto his own house, unto the city from whence he fled."*

In the 1983 Afrikaans translation of the Bible, the cities of refuge are called `asylum cities'; cities to which someone who had caused the death of someone, unfortunately, without premeditation, could flee, to escape the "revenge of a blood relative of the deceased."

These leads provided more questions than answers. Did Jan harm his own child or even kill him accidentally? Was it Jan's psychotic way of wreaking revenge on Sarie? She had divorced him, and she was the third wife he had lost. On the other hand, maybe the leads in the Bible were not leads but merely a quest for consolation and justification for what had happened?

Jan also had a diary in which he made notes. Different coloured pens were used, and Ozzie realised these notes were made at different times. It started when he met Piet Van

Rensburg in prison, what Piet had told him about the children he kidnapped, and ultimately how he disposed of them. He made notes of how the children were taken to Tanzania by yacht and how they were transported into Kenya before being smuggled into Europe, where they were sold.

Furthermore, the name Greta Blettner, with her contact details in Cape Town, had been scribbled in blue pen. Ozzie also noticed that Jan had made notes on his journey to Tanzania and through Africa, from Tanzania to Kenya, and then to South Africa through Mozambique. This was all the evidence he needed to put Jan away for life, he thought, but one question remained unanswered. Ozzie reached for his cell phone and dialled Greta's contact number, but her phone just rang until it stopped without any reply. He realised she wasn't home and hoped she hadn't fled the country. Ozzie decided there was not much more he could do here in Port Elizabeth, so he went to Cape Town to trace and question Greta Blettner about Michael's disappearance.

While travelling to Cape Town, Ozzie traced the address to the telephone number so that when he arrived, he could go directly to her home. According to the police trace on that phone number, her residence was 5 Yellow Fish Street, Houd Bay.

When entering Cape Town, Ozzie entered the address into his GPS and followed the directions, which led him straight to the house. The house was in an upmarket area, with high walls and a wrought iron electric gate.

As Ozzie pulled into the driveway, he noticed a car parked in front of the double garage. He pressed the intercom button, and a lady replied on the other end. "Hullo, can I help you?" she enquired in a friendly tone.

"Hullo, yes. I'm looking for Greta Blettner. Is she perhaps in?" Ozzie asked.

The lady on the other end replied, "Sorry, no. She's not here. My name is Joan. I'm an estate agent. We're cleaning the house for new tenants. Greta left during the night. She took whatever she could and just disappeared. We're also looking for her to claim damages against her deposit, which I don't think she should get back, considering the state she left this place in," said the friendly, talkative estate agent.

`Shit,' Ozzie mumbled to himself. She's probably left the country by now. "Okay, thanks," Ozzie replied as he started his car engine and reversed back into the street.

About a month later, Ozzie was contacted by INTERPOL. A man on the other end of the phone spoke with a heavy Italian accent. He introduced himself and asked if Ozzie was investigating the case of a missing girl. Ozzie's heart skipped a beat with excitement, but he knew that this matter was foreign to him.

The INTERPOL agent continued to explain that a fifteen-year-old girl and her guardian passed through the airport in Rome. Emirates Flight 152 from Dubai landed at 16:30. When the girl passed through security, the airport official became suspicious when checking documentation. The girl's name is recorded as Amy Ramsay from Johannesburg, while her guardian was a thirty-five-year-old male, Otis Kola from Nigeria. The girl was escorted to the interrogation room, where a female staff member interrogated her.

A visibly distraught girl told the officer that her name was Amy Rennady and that she was from Johannesburg. After wiping away her tears, she further explained that she was walking home after school when a construction van drove slowly next to her. She estimated that the driver was about sixty years old, and his passenger was an attractive middle-aged lady. Both were well-dressed and spoke gently to her.

The lady leaned over and started to talk to her. She said they were members of the local Dutch Reform Church and were commissioned to find children to act in a play. So far, there was only one more vacancy, and she fitted the description of the lead actress. If she passed a simple interview, she would become an instant celebrity. Her school headmaster would promote her to prefect, and she would enjoy instant fame and fortune. This lucrative offer was valid only until the next day, as the participants would need to practice for an upcoming opening of the play.

Whilst this lady spoke to her, the driver nodded in agreement but remained silent. She was offered a lift to the church, which was situated at the other end of the suburb. The little girl could not contain her excitement and agreed to accompany the couple for an interview at the church. The

occupants moved slightly, and she sat between them as they casually drove off.

The little girl explained that she was surprised when the driver pulled into the driveway of a middle-class home. The lady told her that her costume was inside and she needed to get dressed for the interview. In the main bedroom, the lady removed a red dress from a cupboard and told her to put it on.

Her friendly tone had become one of instruction. She undressed and was about to get into the costume when suddenly the man walked in. She tried to cover herself by crossing her arms across her body. She felt shy that both stood looking at her when she was dressed in a panty and training bra only.

They moved closer to her, and the lady encouraged her to relax; everything would be alright, and they needed to ensure she would fit the part. Amy started to cry and demanded that they take her home. Her requests fell on deaf ears as both started pulling her arms away from her little body. They groped at her and started to fondle her, despite her protests. She cried uncontrollably, and to her dismay, these adults continued to feel her body and forcefully removed her panties. She was later taken to the cellar, where she stayed for about a week. During her incarceration, the couple would perform sexual acts on her, and she was also forced to watch them having sex. Once the couple had completed their sexual desires, she was discarded like a rag doll and forced to sleep in the cellar.

The little girl told the horrified officer that she was eventually taken to Durban, where she was handed over to a large man who placed her in a cubicle on a yacht where four other girls were detained. All the girls were similar in age, and only two came from Joburg, whilst the others came from Durban. She claims they travelled by yacht for about two days before arriving at another place. A well-dressed man and a woman who spoke German took them to a house that was very far away. After being kept in this house for about two weeks, two of the girls were taken away by a group of men carrying guns. Sometime later, she was also removed from the house by a group of gunmen. They drove very far until she was handed over to another man who took her to an airport. Together, they flew to Italy, where they were apprehended.

Ozzie was stunned by this revelation. Suddenly, all the pieces of the puzzle fell into place. He was on the verge of cracking a massive child trafficking syndicate. This horrendous kidnapping spree had shocked the nation and remained a mystery to all the top detectives. This suddenly turned into the biggest investigation he had ever done. Excitedly, Ozzie relayed the latest information to his less excited commander.

"I will take it from here, thanks. You've done well to investigate this matter, but it is time to resume other equally important investigations."

It was a morning like any other; Ozzie was seated behind his desk, perusing the dockets that needed attention. Other detectives had also just attended the morning lecture and stood around the coffee machine, chatting.

Ozzie's phone rang suddenly. It startled him and interrupted his concentration. Ozzie cleared his throat before answering. A friendly lady on the other end asked if he was the investigating officer in the disappearance of a little boy named Michael. This question perked his interest, and he sat up straight behind his desk. Ozzie tried not to sound too excited and replied in a voice of authority, saying that he was.

The lady at the other end introduced herself as Nicci from Cape Town. She explained that she was a clairvoyant and that she would like to offer her services to trace Michael. She explained that she had assisted detectives in a number of high-profile cases, with relatively good success. Ozzie listened intently but felt his emotions stir up inside him.

"Yes," Ozzie answered, trying not to sound overjoyed that finally, there was hope that this case could be solved. Ozzie knew all too well that this case would haunt him until it was solved.

"I would like to fly to Durban tomorrow. Could you meet me at the airport?" Ozzie found himself nodding in agreement before he uttered a word.

"Good. I'll let you know what time I leave."

Ozzie excitedly replaced the receiver and rushed out of his office to report to his commander. His commander's door stood ajar, and Ozzie knocked and walked in. He told his commander about the phone call he had just received. Ozzie noticed how his Colonel shuffled nervously on his chair as he looked up at Ozzie.

"I instructed you not to continue investigating this matter. All your leads have been exhausted, and you have other, equally important matters to investigate."

"She's flying up from Cape Town tomorrow, Sir. She asked me to meet her at the airport."

The commander thought for a while before answering. "Fetch her and bring her to me. I will interview her."

Ozzie felt as if he had just been punched in the guts. Disappointedly, he nodded and left his commander's office with his head hung low. Ozzie wondered why he was being snow-balled, but he dared not question his commander.

A vibrant, blond, thirty-something walked briskly towards Ozzie from the airport's arrival gate. She was at least ten meters from Ozzie when she walked towards him with an outstretched arm and broad smile, ready to introduce herself with a firm handshake.

Ozzie was overwhelmed by her over-enthusiastic introduction. Ozzie led her to his car outside. She walked briskly, pulling her suitcase behind her, and didn't stop talking. One thought led to the next, and Ozzie just nodded as she took over all conversation. It was only when Ozzie placed her suitcase in the boot and opened the car door for her that there were a few minutes of silence.

As Ozzie started to drive, he broke the silence by saying, "I need to take you to my commander. He wants to interview you." Ozzie noticed how she swung her head towards him, almost in shock.

"But aren't you the lead detective in this case"? she asked in amazement.

"No, I've been instructed to get off the case. Sorry!" Ozzie felt her staring at him in disbelief, but he remained focused on the road ahead. Not really wanting to face her, as there was not much more he could say.

"Is the Summer Sun Hotel far from your office? I have booked a room there and might have to catch a taxi after my interview with your boss."

"No, there's no need for that. I'm sure my colonel will arrange for someone to take you to the hotel." She just stared blankly ahead of her without saying a word.

On arrival at the unit, Ozzie escorted her to the colonel's office before excusing himself. Ozzie spent the rest of the afternoon at the pub. Something was amiss, and this troubled him. He did not know enough to draw a conclusion, but his instincts told him that something was very wrong.

At about eight that evening, Ozzie had enough Dutch courage to confront Nicci. He knew all too well that if the colonel found out he'd been sniffing around, or even worse, if Nicci reported back to the colonel that he had gone to see her, the shit would fly.

Ozzie didn't need to give it any more thought. He had pondered over it, staring at a glass half full of beer all afternoon. This was as good a time as any other, and Ozzie needed answers. The hotel receptionist directed Ozzie to the dining room, where he found Nicci seated alone, enjoying her dinner.

She looked up at him as he entered through the solid wood French door but quickly dropped her stare and looked at the plate of food in front of her. Awkwardly, Ozzie walked towards her and greeted her. She nodded at him with her mouth full of food.

"May I?" Ozzie asked with his hand on the backrest of the chair opposite her. She nodded without looking at Ozzie. Ozzie waited for her to swallow before he broke the silence. "How was your interview with the colonel?" Ozzie asked gently.

Nicci placed her knife and fork on her plate and pushed the unfinished meal aside. She stared directly at Ozzie before speaking.

"What's going on, Ozzie? You have been on the front page of every newspaper in the country, and even magazines have written about you and this case. Now I'm interviewed by an arrogant prick who should be on pension."

Ozzie sat staring blankly at her, hoping that she would say something that he had an answer to. She did not continue speaking until Ozzie gave her an answer, but all that Ozzie could do was shrug his shoulders.

Ozzie realised that any information she had, she would not divulge freely unless he convinced her otherwise. Ozzie started to persuade her that they were on the same side and had a common interest in this matter, then suddenly she interrupted him and said sternly "Ozzie let's cut to the chase and stop this

bullshit about doing the right thing. I can tell you that this is bigger than just you and me!"

Ozzie frowned as he stared into her sky-blue eyes. This was not the time to interrupt her. Ozzie had a gut feeling that she would reveal more if he just let her talk. Ozzie noticed how her upper lip was turning white as she bit hard on her teeth before speaking.

"Look, Ozzie, I have this gift, and I have helped detectives solve very many high-profile cases around the world. I know what I know and I'm no fool. I sense that Michael is alive and well. He now lives with other adults, and he misses his parents terribly. That's all I can say for now."

"I relayed this to your colonel, who stood up from behind his desk and went off at me in a rage of anger. He accused me of wanting to waste state resources and send his detectives on a wild goose chase. He accused me of being a fake by making allegations without any proof."

By that time, Ozzie had ordered a beer, which he sipped slowly whilst listening intensely to what she was saying; "Another thing that really pissed me off is that he told me to tell you the body of this little boy is buried in the backyard of his father's home in Pennington. I don't sense that and don't believe it's true, but I do think you will have to have the yard dug up, for your sake and mine."

"I believe that senior police and prison authorities are responsible for the spate of kidnappings in the late eighties and early nineties and that these crimes are so well covered up, that we might never know the truth. I am on the first flight to Cape Town tomorrow. Sorry I can't be more helpful, but I must warn you, if you scratch a lion's balls, you will be harmed." She stood up and reached out to Ozzie with her familiar, firm handshake.

The following day, Ozzie reluctantly drove to the Prison Service, where he booked out six prisoners who had nearly completed their term of imprisonment for relatively minor offences. Each prisoner was issued with a pick and spade. Ozzie knew that this was a fruitless exercise, but he dared not create any suspicion that he knew, or suspected otherwise.

John sat listening in amazement to what Jan had to say before he started telling his story.

*

I was born in Knysna, or so I think. My father told me years ago that he found me as an infant discarded in a rubbish bin. He told me that he felt sorry for me, as I was only a few days old, and he took me home. My father never married and lived alone in a dilapidated old two-bedroom house in a low-class area. He didn't work and lived off a state grant. I remember that he drank a lot. In fact, I don't think I ever saw him sober.

My father didn't like children, and often shouted at the neighbouring children for making a noise whilst playing. He was dirty and unshaven. The only time he left the house was to get booze, bread and dog food. I hated him, and I don't think he liked me much, either. As a baby, I would wet myself often, and he would take me outside and lock me up with the dogs. He had two German shepherds. These dogs were kept in a wire enclosure at the back of the house. My father would leave me with the dogs for days on end. When he called the dogs to feed them, he would whistle to me also to come and get my food. He would put my food on the ground, and I think he enjoyed watching me grovel in the dirt with the dogs. I wore no pants as he didn't want to wash them when I pissed or crapped myself. He would leave me to sleep with the dogs for days before I was allowed back into the house, just to clean up after him. I remember, one day, I crapped myself. I just couldn't make it to the toilet in time. He shouted at me, breathing his nicotine and alcohol-infused breath into my face. He pulled me by the hair to the dog cage. I cried and protested and begged for his forgiveness, but he would have none of it. He just kept on pulling me into the cage. When we were inside, he took a chain that was tied to a pole and locked it around my neck. There was dog crap and flies everywhere. I cried, and again asked for forgiveness, but all he said was if I didn't want to learn, I should feel. The water bowl and kennel were just out of reach, so I had to make myself as comfortable as possible near a shrub that miraculously was still alive. The shrub grew wildly up the wire fence, which provided shade for about an hour or two in the afternoon. Fortunately, the dogs loved me, and they would put their skinny, tick and flee-ridden bodies close to mine to keep me warm at night.

My father left me there for two weeks at that time. When I was not in the cage, I cleaned the house. I washed the dishes that would pile up on the kitchen sink in my absence. I would wash his clothes. If I didn't wash his clothes, because I was in the cage, he would wear the same dirty clothes for days on end. He just didn't care. He had lost all self-respect and preferred to just be alone. Once, I broke a plate while washing dishes and was given a three-day sentence in the cage. When he was drunk, which was most of the time, he would swear at me. I was just a little boy, and was deeply hurt by his verbal and physical abuse. Many nights, I would cry myself to sleep while lying on the floor in my room. I only had a blanket, which I was grateful for. I was not allowed outside, except when I was in the cage with the dogs. I had no friends. I didn't attend school. I had a terrible upbringing, but he kept reminding me how lucky I was to have a home. He used every opportunity to tell me how useless I was and that not even my mother wanted me. I was trapped, and there was nothing I could do; that was my life.

As I grew older, I wished I had a mother who loved me. I yearned for a mother's love, a mother's touch, and the comfort that only a mother can give. I was lonely and trapped. I was a victim of my own circumstances. I remember wondering what a mother's milk would taste like. Even though I had no idea, I missed not having it as a baby. I believed that I was worthless and must be a very bad person that even my mother didn't want me as a baby. She must have known that I was a bad person. I remember thinking, at the age of about ten, that my name was, "Hey you." My father always said `Hey, you' when he called me. I didn't know any other name, so if anybody ever had to ask me my name, I would say; `Hey you.'

When I was about twelve, I think it was because I was reaching puberty that I realised that I had to do something to change my current situation and my life. I had to free myself of the abuse. I had to meet people, make friends and look for a mother. Many nights, I lay awake wondering how I could change my life, so when my father forced me to feed the dogs, I secretly threw the dog food in the bin without feeding them. This I did for a week, and I noticed that the dogs were getting thinner. My father didn't take any notice as he didn't go outside much. I did this for a week before he received his state grant. I knew all too

well that the week he received his grant, he would drink excessively, more than any other week, because he could afford it. My father received his grant and bought enough booze for the month, although that's what he always thought. It was usually finished in the first week. On the first night, he drank an entire bottle of cane [spirit]. I noticed over the years that it took less and less booze to make him drunk. I always made sure I had done my chores, and made a point of staying out of his way.

Late that night, I quietly crept out of my room and noticed that he had fallen asleep in his chair in the lounge with his glass lying on his chest and alcohol spilt over his shirt. I tip-toed to the kitchen and quietly opened the drawer where the eating utensils were kept. I removed a bread knife and walked quietly into the lounge towards him. I walked up behind him and stood behind his head, which was tilted backwards as he was snoring loudly in a drunken state. I took the knife in my right hand and cut his throat from one side to the other, severing his jugular vein in the process. Blood squirted everywhere, and I heard him gargle in his blood as he woke up in disbelief. With one hand, he held his throat, trying to stop the blood from gushing out, and used the other to try and force his body into an upright position. The cut was too deep and too severe for him to stop the bleeding. Within minutes, he bled out and was dead. His limp body lay slouched in the armchair. I used the bread knife and started to dissect the body. As I removed the limbs, I fed them to the dogs, who were starving by that time. It took me until mid-morning the following day to dissect the body completely.

Now, all I had to do was clean the mess. I filled a bucket with hot, soapy water and started to scrub the carpet, but in spite of all my attempts, the carpet would not come clean, so I decided to discard the carpet. I rolled it up and threw it over the back wall of our property. There were no neighbours at the back, but instead, an open veld where vagrants used to sleep. I discarded his clothes in the bin and decided that it would be too difficult to clean the padded chair, so I also discarded the chair over the wall. I was at peace for the first time in my life. I felt comfortable at home and even started to consider if I should go outside and try to make friends or just meet other kids my age. I unlocked the front door and stepped outside. It felt so strange being on the outside in the front of the house.

I walked in the long grass on the small lawn in front of the house. The grass tickled my toes, and I started to laugh out loud. Children walked past the house on the sidewalk that was between a one-meter-high wall and the road. The girls would walk by and giggle at me, and the boys would just stare, wondering who I could be and where I came from, but nobody stopped to talk to me. Some motorists twisted their heads in disbelief as they drove past. It felt so good to be free.

On the second day, I was standing in the long grass again admiring the passers-by when a boy on a bicycle stopped. He looked at me and said, “So, what’s your name?” I wasn’t quite sure what to answer, so I said, “Hey, you,” and he burst out laughing. He climbed back on his bicycle and rode off down the road, still laughing. Everything I experienced outside the house was new to me, and I loved it. The girls irritated me with their giggles, but I enjoyed the stirring feeling in my groin when I saw them and didn’t quite understand why.

A week later, while I was playing by myself in the front garden, I noticed a white vehicle with a cage on the back pulled up in front of the house. Two men got out. I noticed how smartly they were dressed, with hats on. They both wore the same suit, which I found strange. They approached me and called me closer to the fence. One man asked; “What is your name, Son?” I didn’t know what to say, so I looked down at my feet and didn't reply. Both men packed up laughing.

“Okay, do you live here, or are you just visiting?” I did not quite understand where else I would be coming from if I didn’t stay here, I thought, but I just remained silent—not wanting to make a fool of myself.

“Can we come in, boy?” asked the taller of the two. I just nodded my head.

The taller, friendlier man took me by the shoulder and led me into the house. Once inside, he knelt down to look me in the eyes and said, “Son, tell me, how long have you been living here?” he asked in a gentle tone.

“I’ve always lived here,” was the only thing I could think of saying.

“This is Mr Van As’s house. Is he here?” he asked gently. I just shook my head. “Do you know where he’s gone or when he’ll be back?” the officer asked, and I just shook my head again.

"We'll visit again another time. Is that okay," he asked as he rose to his feet, and I just nodded. The two walked out of the house, talking to one another as they walked towards their car, and in an instant, they were driving down the road.

About a week later, a car stopped in front of the house again. I noticed that it wasn't the same type of car that the two men arrived in. This was just a normal car without a cage on the back. A pretty lady got out of the car and walked towards me. I was standing inquisitively at the front door.

She reached out her hand when she approached me and said, "Hello, my name is Mary. Could I talk to you for a while?" I nodded and moved out of the doorway. "Can I come in," she asked, and I nodded.

We walked into the lounge, and she sat on the sofa. I had an urge to sit next to her, but decided not to, so I sat on a chair opposite her. As she sat down, she folded her legs one over the other and made herself comfortable. I looked at her and noticed a tiny gap where her legs were folded over each other, and I instantly got a dry mouth and felt a stirring feeling in my groin again. She spoke so softly to me and was so nice to me. Her dark hair hung loosely over her shoulders, and to the top of her breasts. I wanted so badly to get close to her, smell her and feel her touch.

"Do you live here alone," she asked. I did not respond.

"What is your name?" she asked. I didn't want her to laugh at me, so I just shrugged my shoulders.

"Okay," she said, "that doesn't matter."

"Where is your mommy?" she asked, trying to get me to say something.

"Don't know," I replied, as I shrugged my shoulders.

She moved on the sofa to make herself more comfortable, and I felt my sexual urges getting stronger. Suddenly a strange but very nice feeling happened to my penis, and I started to ejaculate in my pants. Feelings of guilt came over me. I didn't want her to lock me up with the dogs for wetting my pants, so I crossed my legs to hide the wet spot.

She asked me other questions, but I didn't pay attention. I either nodded or shook my head. Finally, she said that she was done for the day, and she rose from the sofa where she was

sitting. I didn't follow her to the door as I was trying to hide the wet spot on my pants.

"Thank you, I'll come visit again. Okay?" she said as she walked out of the house.

I ran to my bedroom and started to masturbate. That was the first time I masturbated, and I enjoyed it very much. I would masturbate at least twice a day, every day from then on. I didn't care where I was; I masturbated. The slightest feeling, the slightest thought, would make me want to masturbate. I became addicted to having an orgasm.

Every afternoon, at about the same time, I noticed a girl about my age peddling her bicycle past my home. I noticed that every day, she wore the same pretty blue skirt and white blouse, and I wondered why. She would smile and wave at me as I stared at her legs, trying to get just a peak at her inner thighs or panties as she peddled.

One day, she rode past my house and waved as she normally did, but instead of waving back, I beckoned her into the house. She stopped her bicycle and climbed off. She stood staring at me for a while, and I beckoned her in. She pushed the bicycle into the yard, dropped the bicycle to the ground, and walked towards me. She smiled at me and said, "Hello, my name is Kathy." I felt a sudden urge to masturbate when she came closer.

"Hullo, I'm John," I replied. I liked the name John as John Wayne was my favourite cowboy. "Come in," I offered as I stepped aside to let her pass.

"Thank you, but I can't stay long; I have homework to do. She walked into the house, and I locked the front door without her noticing. I couldn't help myself. I grabbed her and threw her to the floor. She tried to fight me, but I used all my strength to overpower her. When she realised that I was stronger than her, she started to cry, so I placed my hand over her mouth. With my right hand, I ripped at her blouse, trying to remove it.

Suddenly, it tore, and her bra showed. Wanting more, I reached between her legs and pulled up her skirt. She again tried to fight me, so I released my hand from around her mouth and used it to hold her hand. I continued to use my right hand as I was up near her panties. At the top of her legs, I suddenly felt a soft, moist spot, which drove me wild. I had to have it at all costs; it was now or never. I managed to pull her panties to one side until

I felt her soft, moist vagina. I managed to pull my pants down and climb on top of her.

She fought even more strongly now, but my will to penetrate her could not be stopped. As I entered her, I started to ejaculate, and the feeling was amazing. I loved feeling her body against mine. Her skin was so soft, and her hair smelt so good.

She cried throughout the entire ordeal, and this made me feel good. No longer was I the one that was treated badly. I had some power and authority over someone. She got up from the floor, still sobbing. She straightened her skirt, and I noticed a blood stain on it. I felt an urge to lick the blood but thought that would be unwise in front of her. She closed her breasts with the torn blouse and ran out of the house crying. Lying on the floor in my room that night, I thought of what had happened earlier, and I masturbated again.

I was convicted of rape and of murder, but due to my age, I received a lesser sentence and was sent to a juvenile rehabilitation centre in the Karoo. I was sentenced to three years for the rape and six years for the murder of my father. The rehabilitation centre would become my college, and that's where I would learn from other juvenile offenders.

I was transported to the facility in the back of a police vehicle. Not a car but a van with a caged canopy. My hands were cuffed behind my back for the duration of the seven-hour trip. The first six hours seemed to go by quite quickly. We travelled at a good speed, and although the scenery was bare, we moved forward quite quickly. The last hour of our journey seemed to take forever. We had turned off the tar road and travelled on a gravel road. The road was bumpy, and the driver tried to maintain his speed, which meant I was literally flying around in the back. He had no regard for potholes and large stones in the road, and the vehicle we were in was taking a pounding.

I was relieved that I could see some form of life ahead. A grey building at the bottom of a large hill, not quite a mountain, is all I could see. As we neared the building, I noticed a high guard tower and a high electric fence around it. As we approached that main gate, we were greeted by guards with dogs patrolling the fence. We stopped outside in front of the gate before a guard opened the gate for us. He had a register in his possession, which

he handed to the driver for him to complete. I felt the vehicle moving again as we entered the facility, with the gate being closed behind us.

The vehicle came to a standstill at the front entrance. Two guards approached the vehicle, and the driver and his crew exited it. The crew walked to the back and unlocked the door. My legs were stiff from the long trip, and it took me a while to get the muscles to move and the blood flowing. I eventually managed to stand up and make my way to the back of the vehicle, to the now-open door.

As I reached the door, one of the guards pulled me by the scruff of my neck, and I fell about a meter to the ground. With my hands still cuffed behind my back, the side of my face was grazed in the dirt. One of the guards pulled me up by my shirt, and I was pushed in the direction of the front entrance. I stumbled forward until I reached the door, which was opened for me from the inside. Again, I was pushed from behind and stumbled forward, trying to keep my balance.

The main door closed with a loud bang behind us. I was led to another security door, which was controlled by control room staff. I heard the lock click open, and one of the two guards accompanying me pushed the door open. We entered an office where I was made to take my shoes and socks off. As I looked up, I saw the biggest black man I had ever seen, standing in front of me, looking down at me. I looked up at him, not knowing quite what to do next. He lifted me up with one hand and pushed me towards another door.

Once inside, I noticed that the tiled floor and walls were slightly wet. He told me to strip and throw my clothes in a bin in the corner, which I did. This big black guy walked over to a hose, which he opened full. The pressure of the water started to sting my body, and I jumped around, looking for some shelter, but there was none. After a thorough hosing, he led me out through a side door. A guard was waiting inside with his arms crossed.

This guard walked over to me and grabbed me by the arm. He forced me over the back of a chair whilst the big black guy shoved his finger up my arse. I yelped in pain, but this was in vain, as he kept his finger there feeling in all directions. When he was done, the other guard grabbed my bottom jaw and pulled it down

roughly. He looked inside my mouth and only released his grip once he was satisfied there was nothing in my mouth.

He forced me to sit on a chair that faced the wall. He switched on the electric hair clippers and started to shave my head. The big black guard lifted me up from the chair and pulled me towards the door we used to enter this room. We exited the room, and he led me down the corridor.

At the end of the corridor, we turned right and entered another room. The person working there placed his hands around my waist and shouted to his assistant, size twenty-six. He placed his hands on my shoulders and shouted, size medium. He looked at my feet and shouted, `Size eight'.

Within a few minutes, I received two shirts, two pairs of pants, and a pair of sandals. I was handed a toothbrush and a cake of soap. I was told to get dressed. I was surprised that the clothes fitted perfectly. The black guard then walked me down the corridor, until we arrived at another steel security gate. The guard pressed a button, and the door clicked open.

The guard walked me down a corridor flanked by cells on either side. I managed to peep into the cells as we walked past and noticed boys aged between twelve and about sixteen years of age in each of the cells. There were four boys per cell with two steel double bunk beds. We walked until we reached a cell on the right. We stopped, and the guard removed a big steel key from his belt and unlocked the door.

"This is your new home for the next six years, until you're eighteen," he said. "Enjoy your stay," he said, pushing me inside.

The top bunk on the left-hand side of the cell was vacant. Now that the shock had become a reality, I started to calm down. My heart stopped racing out of fear, and I came to the realisation that this was my destiny for the next six years. I started to chat to my cellmates. They were arrested for offences such as possession of drugs, housebreaking and theft, theft of motor vehicles and arson. I was the only inmate in our cell that had been convicted of a violent crime.

Dinner was brought to us, and each plate was handed to us through the steel security door. After dinner, we pushed the plates back under the steel door, and the kitchen staff later collected them. At ten o'clock, it was `lights out', and everyone was ordered to go to sleep.

The following morning we were woken at five o'clock and were given an hour to make our beds and clean the cell. At six o'clock, all the cell doors were opened, and we were ushered into a courtyard at the centre of the building. We were made to run around the square courtyard for thirty minutes. We were told to stand in a straight line where we were given exercises to do; all the time, guards walked around and among us armed with batons. If a boy failed or refused to partake in any of these activities, they would be beaten across their back with a baton.

The exercise would continue for another thirty minutes until seven o'clock. We were then made to walk in a straight line to the diner. We stood in a line, and each of us received breakfast on a steel tray. We would eat together for thirty minutes before forming a line again. We would then be ushered to our classroom. There was a group of fifty boys per classroom. All lessons were conducted in English, and everyone received the same lesson irrespective of the standard of education. Classes continued until one o'clock when we were instructed to form a line outside, and we again walked to the diner. Again, we formed a line with our stainless-steel tray in hand, and we dished up our lunch. We sat together and ate.

At two o'clock, we lined up again and walked to a sports field at the back of the prison, where we were divided into teams and had to play soccer. At four o'clock, we again had to form a line and were walked to the showers. At four thirty, we were walked back to our cell, where we had to study and do homework. At seven, we ate dinner in our cell, and by ten, it was `lights out'.

I quite enjoyed the routine. I also enjoyed playing with the other boys, but most of all, I enjoyed my studies. Every day was the same routine except Sundays.

On Sundays, we stayed in our cells and were only allowed out during meals. We were permitted to take books from the library, so I spent Sundays on my bed reading. I was adamant that I would better myself and one day become a doctor or even a lawyer.

One of my cellmates said that he was to appear before the parole board the following day. I asked him what that was, and he explained that a group of officers had a meeting with the inmate, and they decided whether or not he had behaved

himself, if he had learned from his mistakes and if he could be released early or not. This got my interest up. I didn't know that an inmate could be released early. That was brilliant news. I would do my very best at everything to get out of here sooner.

Five years went by, and I studied hard. I was now at the top of my class in all subjects. I was now seventeen years old. I decided to follow my dreams and study to become a doctor, so in my spare time, I read medical journals and studied biology and just about anything I could get my hands on to do with medicine or the human body. My efforts didn't go unnoticed, and I was often rewarded and allowed to sit in the library, even after hours, to read and study.

The human body fascinated me; especially those of women I was about halfway through my seventeenth year when, one day, I was called out of class by a warden. He took me to the administrative section of the prison, where I was hauled before the prison head. As I walked into his office, I noticed two other officers were also present.

"Sit, please," the commander ordered, and I obeyed. He cleared his throat and began to speak. "We've noticed that you have excelled in the classroom; in fact, you have successfully completed your matric. Classes here will not further your education, and as we understand, you would like to study medicine. We can see how you've matured over the years and have turned into a fine young man. We've also studied the court records and have taken into consideration the very difficult circumstances in which you grew up. We have decided to give you a chance to follow your dream to become a doctor. We have decided to offer you a bursary to study medicine at the University of Cape Town. We have given your age a lot of thought and taken into consideration that you are only seventeen, nearly eighteen, but the fact of the matter is that you have passed matric with flying colours. What do you say?"

John was stunned. Never before had anybody given him anything, and here he was given a chance to attend university. He couldn't believe his ears.

"Oh yes, I accept. Thank you, thank you all so very much," John replied.

The commander closed the file in front of him and said, “Congratulations, young man. Consider it done.” John leapt up with joy and ran out of the commander’s office shouting, “I am free, and I’m free.”

John was given the surname of his father, van As, which he hated. He was not his father’s child, and he wanted nothing to do with his father or be associated with his father in any way.

In later years, I would change my surname to Wilson, as there would be absolutely no association with my father and my past. John was given a set of new clothes by the prison authorities and was driven to Knysna. There, he was given a bus ticket, a voucher for clothes, and five hundred rand in cash, which he was to use to start a new life. He was told to catch the bus to Cape Town railway station, where he would be met by prison authorities who would take him to the university campus.

I couldn’t believe how good my life had turned out. I was adamant that I would become one of the best doctors in the country and hoped that one day I would become a specialist.

On my arrival in Cape Town, I was met by prison authorities, who escorted me to the university campus. I walked to the reception desk and was greeted by a friendly middle-aged receptionist. She was clearly expecting me. Without hesitation or any questions, she handed me a key to my room 101 and requested that I place my bag in the room and join the class in the lecture hall, down the passage, as soon as possible. I complied and nervously entered the packed lecture hall. I found a seat and heard the lecture was on anti-bodies. I removed my notepad and pen and started taking notes. While speaking, the lecturer walked towards me, placed a book on the desk in front of me, and told me to turn to page 56. I was nervous and excited at the same time, but listened to what he had to say, and made detailed notes.

After the lecture, all the students gathered in small groups around the campus. I felt quite alone, not knowing who I should talk to, or how to make friends. This feeling didn’t last long, and I was soon approached by a pretty redhead dressed in a short skirt and matching blouse.

She made casual conversation with me and asked me my name and where I came from, to which I replied, Knysna, and so on.

An hour later, I noticed all the students heading toward the lecture hall again, and I followed. I found a seat and realised that the same girl who had chatted to me earlier came to sit next to me. She smiled as she took a seat and placed her books on the desk in front of her. My mouth went dry, and I was at a loss for words. Never before had a girl shown any interest in me, and I wasn't quite sure how to deal with it. I tried to ignore the lustful feeling I felt towards her, and continued to take notes as the lecturer spoke.

All lectures were finally done for the day, and the students got up to leave. I didn't quite know what to expect next, so I just followed the crowd. Some students went onto the lawns in front of the campus, while others went to the canteen. I decided to go to my room and familiarise myself with my new surroundings.

I unlocked the door to my room and was unpacking my belongings when another boy, roughly my age, walked in. "Hi, my name is Chad," said the Chinese boy. "I'm your roommate." He said with an outstretched hand to greet me.

"Hi, my name is John," I replied. He placed his study material on his bed and left. I sat on my bed and started to study the journal the lecturer had handed me.

At six o'clock, I noticed all the students started rushing down the passage, so I got up off my bed and followed them, not knowing what to expect.

Everyone rushed to the mess, and I realised that it was dinner time. Dinner was a buffet, and I chose to eat a lot of meat. I took my plate of food and found a seat at a vacant table, and I sat down to eat.

I was still eating my meal when I was approached by the same girl who had chatted to me earlier. She pulled a chair out from under the table and sat next to me. I looked at her plate of food and noticed that she only ate vegetables, `how boring,' I thought.

"I didn't introduce myself earlier," she said with a smile and an outstretched hand. "I'm Melanie, but everybody calls me Mel."

"Hi," I replied and shook her hand. We ate dinner together, but I was too shy to have a decent conversation.

The following Saturday, Mel came to my room. I was surprised that she knew where I was sleeping. She told me that they were having a party at Crawford House, which I had learned was another dorm, and she invited me to join her. She said that one of the students would be DJ-ing, and these parties were so much fun. She then changed her mind, and instead of inviting me, she insisted that I meet her there at eight o'clock. I decided to arrive a little before eight so as not to be late.

On my arrival I heard the music being played at full blast. The guys there were drinking, laughing and having a good time. A short while later, Mel arrived. She looked sexy in her tight-fitting blue dress. Her red hair waved in the Cape Town wind as she walked towards me. She greeted me, took me by the hand, and led me inside. She started to dance with me. I felt awkward as I had never danced before and was not quite sure what to do.

She placed her arms around my neck, moved up close to me, and said; "Just relax, you look so nervous. I promise I won't bite." After dancing to a song, she took me by the hand and led me to the bar, ordered two beers and handed me one. The taste was bitter but refreshing. I had never had alcohol before, but I wasn't going to tell her. After the beer, I started to feel lightheaded and said that we should go outside for some fresh air.

We walked to a quiet spot near a tree and before I could say anything I realised that she was kissing me. And kissing me, she did. I felt an erection forming in my pants, and I pulled her closer. She responded and kissed me harder and longer. I felt my hand move up the back of her open-back dress until I felt her bra strap. I decided not to undo the strap, as much as I had to fight and resist myself from doing so. After a long time of kissing and fondling, we decided to go back inside. We danced and drank more beer. I was having the time of my life. As the music started to wind down, students started to leave. Some couples walked toward the campus holding hands, laughing.

I asked Mel if she would like to come to my room, but she refused, saying we should wait a while. I was filled with feelings

of disappointment and rejection, but I just smiled as we went our separate ways.

During the weeks that followed, we spent most of our spare time together. We also studied together, either in her room or mine.

The following week, we met on every possible occasion. She would tell me things that would make me laugh. We would hold hands and kiss often, and I started to fall in love. I realised that her feelings for me were also growing stronger.

During the week that followed, we discussed the weekend that lay ahead and planned to go up Table Mountain. She told me about the cable car ride up the mountain and how beautiful it was from up there. We were so excited and looked forward to the outing. She told me about the wine land, the beautiful scenery around Cape Town and the historical museum. We just loved spending time together, and every moment with her was precious. One day, she smiled and handed me a little box, wrapped in pretty paper. “This is for you,” she said, “just a little something to say I love you.” I opened the box, which contained a Swiss pocket knife. I loved it and blushed at the thought of not having anything to give her in return. “Thank you so much. What a perfect gift. I love you too.” I said, and put the pocket knife in my pocket.

One day, before our planned trip up Table Mountain, I suggested that we study together in my room. I knew that Chad would be out for the evening, which he was spending with his parents, and she agreed as she had done so before, and we actually studied well together. At about nine that evening, she came to my room with her study material under her arm. She walked into my room and sat on my bed as she had done so often before.

I would normally close the door to minimise the noise, but this time, I locked the door without her noticing. I walked to my single bed and sat beside her. She crossed her legs, and I caught a quick glimpse of her white panty between her legs, and this drove me insane. I leaned forward and started to kiss her passionately, and she responded. Soon, we were in each other’s arms, lying on my bed. She started to move her body, excited by the passion. I could feel her firm breasts against my chest and felt

her nipples become erect. She started to pant gently in my ear as she thrust her pelvis hard against mine. I moved my hand and cupped her breast, feeling her heart pound under my palm. Slowly I moved my other hand up her leg, and moved her skirt to the side. I was erect and ready; I wanted her so badly and could hardly contain myself.

When I touched her groin, she stopped and said in my ear, "I'm not ready. This can wait for another time," and she pushed my hand away.

I would have none of it. I needed to make love to her, I had been playing nice for too long, and the time was now. Feelings of rejection and anxiety came over me. This was going to happen, whether she liked it or not, I didn't care. It was time for me to take control, to get what I wanted. I didn't think of our relationship, or the consequences of my actions. I didn't really care about that right now; all I wanted was sex, and now. I forced my body between her legs, forcing her legs apart.

She started to fight me and push me away, which made me more determined. Never again was I going to be pushed away. I was somebody now, and I deserved to be treated with respect. Girls needed to know I was a man and would take what I wanted.

Mel started to cry and resisted me, but that turned me on even more. I enjoyed hearing her cry. I enjoyed seeing her so hopeless underneath me. I managed to hold her hands above her head, and with my other hand, I pulled her panties to the side. I was so fully erect that I easily managed to force myself inside of her.

She looked at me in complete horror and disbelief, but this was my time, and it was all about me. I loved the sensation of being inside her. It gave me a feeling of satisfaction, and then the orgasm. It felt so very good. Mel had stopped crying by that time and realised that there was not much she could do to stop me, so she submitted and let me carry on having intercourse with her. I released my grip on her and fell on the bed next to her panting. A feeling of complete satisfaction came over me. Mel jumped up off the bed, straightened her blouse and skirt, and ran towards the door in complete horror and disbelief, wondering what had just happened to her. She unlocked the door and ran to her room.

As I lay on my bed, feeling quite satisfied and pleased with myself. I suddenly had a flashback to the time I raped Kathy when

I was twelve years old. Mel had the same reaction, I thought. Girls were so inferior, so weak, I thought. I didn't understand what all the fuss was about. People had sex all the time, and girls who didn't submit had to get raped; that's just the way it is.

I hadn't seen much of Mel after that night, and I didn't really care much for her anyway. I had got what I wanted, and it was time to move on. I started chatting with a girl in my class, Janet. She was known as the classroom slut. I often heard the guys talking about how they fucked her at the last party. She was a lot of fun and didn't even mind taking on two guys at a time. She seemed easy enough, and I didn't need to date her. There was no need to impress her or buy her nice things. She liked to fuck, and that's what I would do.

After chatting with Janet for a day or so during our breaks, I jokingly invited her to my room that night, and she agreed. I heard that she was easy, but I didn't think she was that easy. That night, I told Chad to stay away for an hour or so, and he agreed with a smile on his face. He knew what I had planned with Janet.

Around ten that night, Janet knocked at my door as arranged. I opened the door and smiled at her as she entered. Janet was a tall, rather attractive brunette in her mid-twenties. She had once told me that her father was a wealthy citrus farmer and that she had failed her second year of medicine twice. Her father encouraged her by saying that she should keep trying and that she would eventually pass, so he just kept paying for her studies.

I don't think she was too interested in her studies, but she was at university for the parties. Janet walked into my room with a loose blouse and without a bra. Her skirt was loose, and I found out that she wasn't wearing any panties.

There was not much talking, and definitely no flirting. I loved the idea that Janet took all the hard work out of getting laid. It was just so easy, and we both enjoyed it. There was no crying, no resistance, no bitching or moaning. This was just great. We fucked each other for about an hour. She got up, smiled and left. It was so simple. I wondered why all girls couldn't be like this. After all, they also enjoyed sex, so what was all the fuss about?

One Saturday afternoon, I decided to go into Cape Town by taxi. I walked around the city and admired the little shops in

the alleys and the view of Table Mountain from the city itself. I was astonished at how many pretty young girls there were in Cape Town. They all seemed so laid back and cheerful. I found a quaint pub hidden between the shops and decided that although I didn't drink much, I would go for a drink just to feel the vibe and experience the friendliness of the people of Cape Town. I walked in and found a vacant chair at the bar counter. I ordered a vodka and lime and sat there admiring the décor. Music played, and as the sun set, I noticed the pub starting to fill with young adults. It became quite festive, and the music became louder. I ordered another vodka and lime and enjoyed the atmosphere.

Later that evening, I was approached by a lady wearing high heels and a mini skirt. She sat beside me, and we started chatting. She had obviously noticed that I was alone and started to flirt with me. She was the kind of woman I liked. She was easy to talk to, and laughed often as I spoke. She told me that her name was Sue and asked me if I would be interested in having some fun at a price.

This was just perfect, I thought. No buying drinks or dinner. No trying to chat her up, just sex at a price. I agreed. I followed her outside, and she told me that she would give me anything for an hour and for two hundred rand. Perfect, I thought as I walked with her to her car. We drove to Signal Hill, a hill adjacent to Table Mountain, where she told me lovers came to have sex. I was very interested in her proposal and wondered how best to get my money's worth for an hour long. After all, she did say `anything for an hour for two hundred rand.' She stopped her car on top of Signal Hill, overlooking the city lights. The view from there was spectacular, but I had other things on my mind.

She tilted the passenger seat, which I was in, backwards and started to undo my pants. She took my erect penis and forced it into her mouth. She sucked and moved up and down until I had an orgasm. I enjoyed it but wanted more. After all, I was paying for an hour, not for ten minutes. She wiped her mouth and sat back on her seat, ready to start the car.

I grabbed her by the hand, preventing her from starting the car, and reminded her of our agreement. She smiled and asked what else I would like her to do, and I told her to remove her top and bra. She positioned herself properly and did as I said. Her nipples were dark and erect. I wanted to suck them, so I pulled

her closer and started to suck on a nipple. It suddenly occurred to me that this is what I was deprived of as a baby, and this is what I had missed out on in my developmental years. I wanted more of it and started to suck harder. At first, she enjoyed it, or at least pretended to be enjoying it, but then started to complain that I was hurting her, and said that I should be gentler. I realised then that I was hurting her, inflicting pain on her breasts and enjoyed the thought of it. I sucked harder and squeezed her breast tightly.

She started to complain and tried to push me away, but I enjoyed the challenge. I bit her nipple and could taste the blood in my mouth. She screamed in pain, pushing my head away, but I pulled her body tightly towards me. She started to panic and hit me on the head with a clenched fist, trying to break free from the grip I had on her, but I held her tight. I sucked at the nipple even harder, enjoying the screams that came with it. I moved my left hand upwards, took hold of her wrists, and held them above her head. I placed her nipple between my teeth, bit it off, and swallowed it without chewing. The frenzy it caused and the squirt of blood in my mouth aroused me again.

All her shouting and screaming were in vain, as there was not another car in sight. She bled profusely over her top and onto her skirt, and I enjoyed every minute of it. I felt her body go limp as she passed out in pain. Her arms fell loosely in front of her as I let her wrists go. I placed my hands around her throat and suffocated her. I was so aroused by what I had done that my penis was hard again.

I exited the vehicle, walked to the driver's side door, and opened it. I managed to remove her dead body from the vehicle and threw her over the bonnet of the car. With one hand, I grabbed her by the hair and held her in place while I moved her panties down her legs, and I fucked her in the arse. I left her lifeless body lying next to the car. I managed to walk down Signal Hill and caught a taxi back to campus.

I lost all interest in my studies, and my marks declined rapidly. Towards the end of the term I realised that I would possibly fail as I had not studied enough. Even my time spent in lectures was a waste of time. I couldn't concentrate and couldn't stop thinking

about what I had done to the prostitute, and the satisfaction I received from it. I knew I had a problem, but I didn't want to stop.

I had to kill again, and soon because it was driving me insane. I found myself waking up during the night with an erection. I masturbated and imagined that I was sucking on a nipple, and then I would kill the woman. The feelings grew stronger, so I decided that it was time to invite Janet to my room.

A day or so later, Janet agreed to meet me in my room, as discussed. She walked in skimpily dressed and sat on my bed.

"How daring are you?" I asked, and she looked at me confused. "I mean, let's be daring and have sex in a public place," I explained.

The thrill of not getting caught could bring a new and exciting dimension to our casual sex relationship. She smiled at my question and asked, "What do you have in mind?"

I replied; "Let's fuck in the park."

She smiled again and nodded. I had a feeling that this was nothing new and that she had done this before. We left my room and walked out of the boarding establishment, holding hands and laughing as we chatted. We walked to a dark, secluded area far from the boarding establishment. I thought that this would be a good enough place to fuck. We lay on the soft grass and started to kiss each other passionately. I moved my hand and started to undo the buttons of her blouse, and she didn't seem to mind. I then cupped my hand around her breast and felt her hard nipple in the palm of my hand. I became aroused and started to breathe into her mouth as we kissed. She panted slightly in response.

Soon, her bra had been removed, and her breasts were exposed. I noticed in the shadows that her nipples were erect. I placed a nipple in my mouth and moved my hand between her legs. When I reached her soft, warm, moist spot, I inserted two fingers inside her and felt how she responded with a gasp. I moved my fingers in and out of her and watched as she was enjoying what I was doing to her.

My focus was more on her nipple as I sucked harder, but I kept moving my fingers in and out of her and enjoyed watching her not being in control. As she was about to climax, I removed my fingers from inside her and felt her grab my wrist to pull my

hand closer to her, but I snatched my hand away with a sudden jerk.

She looked at me in amazement for a moment before I placed my hand around her throat and started to strangle her. She kicked fiercely, trying to get free from the grip I had on her. She grabbed me by the forearms and tried to release the grip I had on her, but I was too determined and tightened my grip around her neck until I felt her lifeless body beneath mine.

Her blank eyes stared back at me as I moved my body on top of hers. I spread her legs and forced myself into her lifeless body, continuing to suck at her nipple. As I was about to orgasm, I bit her nipple off. I felt a trickle of blood in my mouth as I swallowed the nipple. I covered her lifeless body and walked calmly back to my room.

The following day, Janet's body was discovered by ground staff, who reported their finding to management. The police were immediately notified. Within thirty minutes, there were at least five police vehicles on campus.

Many students inquisitively gathered on the grounds, huddled in groups, and discussed the findings. Some girls covered their mouths and cried, whilst others just stood and stared at Janet's body in shock. The guys, who also couldn't believe that a murder had been committed on campus, spoke amongst themselves as to who could've committed such a brutal act.

The police cordoned off the area, and the photographers were photographing the body. A forensic team was also on-site, and they examined the body and surrounding area in search of clues. Other detectives were talking to students and making notes.

Janet's lifeless body was placed into a blue body bag and onto a stretcher. She was then carried to the morgue vehicle by two pale-faced officers, placed inside, and the vehicle sped off.

Detectives spoke to the girl who had found her first to establish her identity. Once that information was obtained, they were asked if she was involved with anyone. It was obvious from the crime scene that this was a crime of passion. The detective realised that robbery was not a motive, for obvious reasons. She had been raped, and they noticed that her nipple had been bitten

off. Based on the facts before them, they came to the conclusion that it was unlikely that another female had killed her.

They were looking for a male who had deep psychological issues. A male who wanted to take revenge on her, or maybe she was just a victim because of his own psychopathic tendencies.

They wondered why the nipple had been bitten off, and where it was as they searched the area for it, but no nipple could be found. The detectives often dealt with rape cases, and the only way in which this rape was different was the issue of the nipple and that she had been killed. They came to the conclusion that the perpetrator was very angry toward women, as the murder was so brutal and violent, and he, in all likelihood, enjoyed inflicting pain on his victim. The detectives soon established who her friends and roommate were and established that Janet wasn't in any permanent relationship. Not that she had anything against boys, just that she didn't want to be bogged down to one guy in a steady relationship. They tried to determine from her roommate if she had seen anyone in particular the previous night, but the roommate couldn't say for sure as she hadn't slept in her own room the previous night. She had spent it with her boyfriend. She last saw Janet at dinner, which they spent together, but Janet didn't discuss her plans with her. Some of the boys were also interviewed, but nobody could shed any light on the case.

I was relieved that I was not interviewed, although I also stood amongst the guys discussing the case. The detectives probably thought I was too young to commit such a horrendous act. The interviews continued throughout the day, until the detectives decided to leave. The campus was a hive. Everyone spoke of Janet's death, and everyone knew that the killer was on campus, but because Janet wasn't seeing any guy in particular, it became difficult to speculate as to who the perpetrator was. Girls were too afraid to leave their rooms, and those with boyfriends had their boyfriends come to their rooms.

I had lost total interest in my studies and felt I was wasting my time attending varsity, and I realised that my dreams of becoming a doctor were going to be short-lived and that the possibility of that happening was nothing but a farce. I had to get a job. I caught a taxi into Cape Town and started to walk the

streets in search of a job, but because of my age and minimal work experience, I soon realised that this was going to be a difficult task.

For two days, I walked around and asked every shop if there was a vacancy for me, but nobody wanted to employ me. On the third day, I walked the streets of Sea Point and came across a bar called `Pink'. I realised that this was a gay bar. I was desperate and needed a job, so I walked in and found a handsome but gay bartender standing behind the bar counter. The décor was bright and colourful, with different coloured bottles displayed on glass shelved against a mirrored wall. The couches were modern, and each was a different and bright colour. The background music that played was soothing, and not loud. As I approached him, he looked me up and down and asked if he could help me in a very gay tone.

I replied that I was looking for a job to which he replied that I should wait there as he would call the owner. He walked into an office at the back and soon thereafter returned, saying that she was coming. I was expecting a gay man and was surprised when the bartender said that she was coming. I didn't quite know what to expect.

Within a few minutes, a tall, thirty-something brunette with hair down her back walked out of the office. She was wearing a short skirt, loose top and high-heeled shoes, which made her look even taller than she was. Make-up was applied generously to her face, probably to disguise the wrinkles and bags under her eyes caused by late nights and living it up in parties. She stopped, placed her hand on her hip, and examined me from head to toe with her eyes.

"So I hear you're looking for a job?" She asked in a husky voice caused by too much smoking.

"Yes, ma'am," I replied, "anything, please." She beckoned me to her office and closed the door behind me.

"Do you know what kind of pub this is?" she asked, as she took a seat behind her desk.

I thought of how to answer her without offending her, but realised that there was only one way to say it and hope that she wouldn't be offended, so I replied with confidence, "Yes, a gay bar."

She lit a cigarette and smiled at me. “Yes,” she responded, “It is. Can you handle that?”

“Yes, anything, please. I’m desperate and need a job urgently.” She thought for a moment, took a drag of her cigarette and stared at me. I felt uncomfortable at her piercing brown eyes staring right through me, but I stood my ground.

”What’s your name,” she asked.

“John,” I replied; “John Smith.” I didn’t want to give her my real surname because I hated it, and I wanted my past to stay behind me.

“All right, John. I need another bartender; it gets very busy in here, especially at night. I’ll offer you fifteen rand an hour, over and above any tips you’ll receive. Your shift will be from five in the afternoon until closing, with a Monday off. On Mondays, I do stock take and order stock for the week. What do you say?” she asked as she took another drag from her cigarette and exhaled the smoke through her nose.

I couldn’t stop smiling and nodded my head in agreement. “Good. Jonathan will teach you the different cocktails, the cash register, the cash float and just about all you need to know. We will not do an employment agreement for tax purposes, and I’ll pay you weekly, understood?”

“Yes, yes, that’s fine, thank you,” I said; still grinning at her.

She had finished her cigarette, stumped the butt in the ashtray and rose from behind her desk with an outstretched hand. “Welcome to the Pink,” she said, smiling back at me.

I was overjoyed at the opportunity, and my reaction, punching the air, showed it. I followed her out of her office to the bar counter, where she introduced me to Jonathan and told him that I would be an assistant bartender and that he would teach me everything I needed to know about being behind the bar counter. He greeted me by shaking hands and smiled.

The owner, who I learned was Michelle, gave me the afternoon off to find accommodation and suggested I try the YMCA down the road, which was within walking distance from the pub.

She said I would start my training the following morning, at nine, although the pub only opened at ten, all staff had to start an hour earlier. I walked out of the pub with such relief, knowing

that I had found employment and I could finally leave my past behind me and start a new life.

I walked down the road with a bounce in my step and whistling a tune that I didn't even know. I reached the YMCA, pushed the double glass door open, and walked inside. The plastic square floor tiles were outdated, and the walls needed a coat of paint, but it was clean. I walked to a reception office near the entrance and found an elderly lady seated behind a desk.

"Good morning, ma'am. My name is John, and I was wondering if you could help me find a room for a few weeks until I found my feet." I asked in my best polite voice.

She looked at me and smiled. She rose from behind her desk and came towards me at the window between the lobby and her office.

"Let's see how we can help you, my boy," she replied. "I will have to fill out this questionnaire," she replied. She placed a questionnaire on the countertop at the window. "Your name?" she asked.

I replied, "John Smith."

"Age?"

"Eighteen."

"Married, divorced or single?"

"Single"

"Any dependants?"

"No," I replied.

"Are you employed or unemployed?"

"Employed."

"Monthly income between one and five thousand rand, five and ten thousand or ten thousand upward," she continued.

I wasn't quite sure how to answer and didn't want to sound extravagant, so I replied, "Between one and five thousand."

"Denomination?"

That stumped me, so I just answered, "Methodist."

She examined my answers for a moment and walked back to her desk. She opened another file, paged through it, and walked back to me with a key she had removed from a board containing hooks where keys were kept.

She placed a piece of paper in front of me and said; "You will be requested to pay one thousand rand rent a month,

payable no later than the first day of every month. No parties, alcohol or drugs are permitted on these premises," she explained and asked me to sign the form she had placed in front of me.

I agreed and signed the contract. She handed me the keys to Room 503, which she explained was on the fifth floor.

"Sorry, we don't have an elevator, but the stairs are around the corner to your right."

I smiled, thanked her and took the room keys from her. The room was small, with a single bed and a cupboard, but it was comfortable enough. Fortunately, the communal bathroom was at the end of the corridor, not far from my bedroom.

I settled in, unpacked my clothes and made my bed. The sheets and blanket were folded neatly at the end of the bed.

Early the following morning, an excited John made his way to work. He had shaved, showered, and looked his best for his first day at work. He had never had a job before, and was nervously excited at the start of this new chapter in his life. He arrived at work before anyone else and stood at the front door, watching the motorists go by.

At nine o'clock, Jonathan arrived, quite surprised to see John standing in front of the door. "Your shift only starts at five," he said with a smile. He wiggled his bum closer to the door and unlocked it.

"I know," I said. "I was just hoping you could teach me the ropes in the meantime. I don't mind if I'm not paid for these hours. I would like to get to know my way around before my shift starts." I said, smiling back at him.

He beckoned me in as he walked through the front door. He switched on the lights and the air conditioner and walked behind the counter. He reached down and removed beer glasses, which he placed in the fridge and wiped down the counter.

The first customer for the day asked for a cup of coffee, which Jonathan ordered from the kitchen. John just watched and helped where he could; he was surprised that some men who visited the pub wore suits and were obviously businessmen, others looked like rugby players, and others arrived on big motorbikes. They were all gay. Only the feminine gays were very noticeably gay, but as for the rest, they looked like normal men.

It was after midday when Michelle arrived. She greeted us as she walked in and walked to her office. A short while later, I heard her calling my name, so I got up from the bar stool from behind the counter and walked to her office. I knocked on her door, and upon entering, I noticed her seated behind her desk. She asked why I was so early, and I told her that I wanted to learn as much as I could before my shift started. She smiled at me and asked me to please fetch her a double whiskey, which I did.

My shift started, and I assisted Jonathan behind the counter. I enjoyed my new job. I enjoyed interacting with new people, and enjoyed how some tried to flirt with me, but I made it clear that I was not that way inclined and wasn't interested. As the night drew on, the party grew louder. Guys started dancing with each other, flirting with each other, and some even kissing each other. This was all new to me, but I decided to stay neutral and not comment.

About a week had passed, and Michelle called me into her office. She told me that she had noticed that I was working hard and had fitted in well. She asked me if I was enjoying my stay at the YMCA and started to make idle chat. We spoke about our likes and dislikes, previous relationships and what we wanted out of life.

I was not going to be honest about my life so far, so I kept it very simple, saying that I had one girlfriend before, whilst I was at school, but after school, we broke up because she went to study at Wits, in Joburg. She told me about a few of the relationships she had been in and how she had become disillusioned and disappointed after a while.

She asked if I would like to come for dinner on Monday night, as the pub was closed then. I accepted with gratitude and looked forward to a home-cooked meal. She said that she would fetch me at the pub around eight on Monday evening, and I agreed, thanking her.

On Monday, around seven, I stood at the door of the pub. One of my friends at the YMCA gave me some aftershave to wear, and I looked as good as I could. A little before eight, she arrived driving a white Mercedes convertible and stopped in front of the door. I approached the car and climbed in. She wore a short skirt, which revealed her long, well-defined legs and a low cut, which

revealed her cleavage. She smelt so good, and her scent filled the car.

She commented that I looked good and drove off with a little wheel spin. She drove to Clifton Beach and stopped at a high-walled property with a large house on the hill. She waited briefly for the automatic gates to open before driving up the driveway. She parked her car in a bay designed for visitors and switched off the engine. I sat in the car for a few moments, staring at the house. Massive windows faced the beach. The lights were on, and I could see the modern décor from where I sat. I was absolutely astonished at its beauty.

She closed her door and invited me in. Without saying a word, I walked towards the front door. She opened the door for me, and I stepped inside. The thick, lush carpets covered the entire floor, from wall to wall. She had what looked like antiques hanging against the wall and more mirrors in one area than I had ever seen before.

"Come sit. Make yourself comfortable. Can I pour you a whiskey," she offered.

"Yes, thank you,' I replied, still looking around in amazement. I sat on a sofa that was so well padded that I sat on it without it sinking in. it was so comfortable, and the view …! Well, that was absolutely amazing. The lights below, together with the light from the moon, caused a glitter on the ocean below.

She handed me a whiskey and offered to show me around. She opened the front door again and led the way. To the left of the lounge was an infinity pool with dim lighting around a water feature, which formed a waterfall. Steam rose slightly off the water in the cool night air. The pool lighting made the water look sparkling blue and inviting. Two deck chairs were situated on the side of the pool. She walked through the biggest glass doors I have ever seen and walked to an entertainment area. This area was equipped with a solid oak bar counter and a wide variety of drinks hanging from the wall, each on its own optics. There was a large screen television set mounted to the wall and a full-size snooker table in the centre of the room. The lighting was just perfect, with the majority of light over the snooker table and only dim lights in the bar area. I was gobsmacked and stared in amazement.

She ushered me through a side door, and we entered the kitchen. It was ultra–modern with a high gloss, glass and chrome finish. Every appliance seemed brand new. Downlights were strategically placed to allow just enough light in areas where it mattered. I could smell that something was cooking in the oven, and I realised that I was getting hungry. We walked back into the lounge, where I sat on the sofa.

"Another drink?" she offered as she finished her whiskey with the sound of ice clattering in her glass.

"Yes, thank you," I replied. She took my empty glass and walked toward the table where the whiskey stood, and topped us up. She walked back to me, handed me the glass of whiskey, and sat beside me on the sofa with her legs crossed but with her knees on the sofa and her feet off. She twisted her body as she faced me.

"So what do you think?" she asked with a smile, holding the whiskey glass in one hand.

"Think of you or of the house?" I asked, taking a sip of my whiskey.

"Both," she replied, smiling. "Absolutely stunningly beautiful, and the house, well, it's okay." I said with a twinkle in my eye.

She smiled back at me as she moved herself on the sofa to make herself more comfortable. She lit a cigarette and inhaled the smoke deeply.

Whilst exhaling, she said, "I got the house from my ex-husband. I had to fight for it, but eventually, I had his balls in such a knot he gave in and gave me the house." She said, enjoying the thought of it.

"What do you mean?" I enquired. "The bastard was gay all along, and I didn't notice. He was the original owner of the `Pink', and the bastard was having affairs behind my back; he told me that he was working late. In the meantime, he was screwing around.

We divorced last year, and my lawyers took him for everything he owned. I believe he has moved to Joburg and has started a gay club in Melrose. I haven't heard from him in months, and I hope I never do. Anyway, enough of that, let's have dinner. We stood up from the sofa and walked to the eight-seater dining room table, and we sat down.

"Maria," She called. Soon, the maid came with a warm tray and a variety of glass dishes, which she placed on the table. "Thank you, Maria; you may be excused for the rest of the evening. You can clean up in the morning," Michelle instructed.

The maid nodded her head politely and left. There was enough food to feed all the residents of the YMCA. Michelle opened the dishes and said, "Please help yourself."

There was a lamb shank, with cauliflower and cheese sauce, rice and gravy, roast potatoes and a mixed vegetable. I thought I was going to faint at the site of all this food, but I was polite and dished up a small portion of each.

The meal was most enjoyable, and we chatted throughout. After dinner, we walked back to the sofa, and she offered me a lacquer, and I agreed. We sipped at the lacquer whilst she also enjoyed a cigarette. She finished her cigarette, and before we finished sipping our lacquers, she said, "Come let me show you the rest of the house. You haven't seen upstairs yet."

She led me by the hand up the stairs. She stopped and opened the first door on the right, and stepped inside. Her bedroom was absolutely luxurious. The lights were turned to dim, casting faint shadows on her bed. The bedcovers were a pale white, with colourful pillows stacked up against the headboard. Dim LED lights surrounded her dressing table, and a variety of perfumes were displayed on the counter. There was a single picture of a seascape in pastels on her wall. The *en suite* bathroom was near the entrance to the bedroom, and I noticed that the floor and wall tiles were in pale pastel colours.

She pulled me closer to her as she walked backwards towards the bed. She placed her arms around my neck and started to kiss me passionately. I felt her hands move towards the front of my shirt as she started to undo the buttons. Soon, I stood in front of her without a shirt, as she had removed it whilst still kissing me. I moved my hands to remove her blouse, which also fell to the floor. I moved to undo her bra strap, and as her bra fell to the floor, she pulled me closer to her.

Her skin was so soft, and she smelt so good. Her nipples were erect in the dimness of the light. I moved my hand up her leg and felt her moist, soft area between her legs. She responded by opening her legs slightly to allow me access. She untied my pants, and I felt them fall to the floor around my ankles. She

removed her panties and displayed what I wanted to see, wanted to feel and wanted to fuck. She took my penis, which was rock hard and put it in her mouth and started to suck at it gently.

I stopped her and laid her gently on the bed beside her. She wanted me so badly by that time, and I could feel how wet she was. She moved to lie on her back; she was so beautiful, and I was so hard and so ready. We kissed and explored each other's bodies with our fingertips.

I heard her start to climax, and then suddenly, I heard a baby cry. I thought for a moment that there were babies in heaven because that's where I was. I sat up in shock. I couldn't believe what I had just heard. She jumped up, put on a dressing gown, and left the room.

I just lay there. The moment was gone, and I had lost interest. After a while, I got up and dressed and sat at the end of the bed, waiting for her. She returned a while later and found me dressed and sitting at the end of the bed.

She said, "Sorry about that," like she had farted or something. It was just so matter of fact; so like it didn't matter.

Well, it did to me, and I was pissed off; the moment was gone. I asked her to take me back to the YMCA, and she pleaded with me to stay. I was too pissed off and thought that if I stayed, I might do something I'll regret. She also realised that the passion was over, so she dressed, and twenty minutes later, I was back at the YMCA.

I was horny as hell. I had to get laid, and I didn't care how, where or by whom, so I decided to walk along Sea Point and look for someone. While walking along the beachfront, I came across couples in love. Some walked along the beachfront holding hands, and some couples found a bench and kissed passionately. I was getting more frustrated and desperate as I continued to walk.

I couldn't identify any victim that would be easy prey and that I could have sex with out in the open without being noticed, so I continued to walk until I came to the older part of town. The houses were probably a hundred years old. Most of them had a Cape Dutch style with white-washed walls. I walked up a small side road and noticed that all the houses were rather closely built together, with one-meter-high walls in front of each house. The

roofs were all made of corrugated iron, and painted either green, red or black.

As I walked past these homes, I noticed that most had many lights on, which gave me an indication that parents lived there with children, and they were still awake, either watching television or doing homework.

This suburb was surprisingly quiet. No dogs barked at me as I walked past. The single-lane road was likely a one-way as two cars could not fit side by side on this narrow road. I continued to walk uphill in the hope that I would find a prostitute, but I knew all too well that they were in the city, where people were and where they were more likely to ply their trade.

I came to the top of the hill, and to my right, I noticed a house with only one light on. I assumed this was either a bedroom light or a lounge light. I thought maybe a single person lived there. I could gain access without causing too much disturbance, and hopefully, it was a young lady who would gladly satisfy my needs. I jumped over the small road-facing wall, stood still, and listened for a moment. When I was satisfied that there were no dogs, I slowly approached the house.

I carefully looked through the tiny gap between the curtains and noticed a lady sitting with her back towards the window, facing the television set, which was on quite loud. I stood and stared for a while and couldn't see any other lights on or any other movement in the house, so I crept quietly around to the back of the house, which was in darkness.

When I arrived at the back door, I stood on the step and managed to look through the kitchen window, which was situated next to the back door. I saw a lady with long grey hair seated with what looked like a thin blanket over her knees. A small dog lay fast asleep on the floor next to her.

With my Swiss Army Knife, I managed to break the rotten wood window frame, and in no time, I could reach the window handle, which I opened. I looked inside again and noticed that neither the lady nor the dog had moved. Fortunately, the television set was loud, and she did not hear me enter the house. I climbed through the window and into the kitchen. I stood on the steel sink and stepped down onto the floor.

I quietly walked towards her and noticed that she had fallen asleep in the chair while watching television. I walked

towards her when the dog suddenly started to bark at me, which woke her up.

She looked at me, startled, and I realised that she was an elderly lady. Her hair was silver grey and tied into a bun. She looked at me intensely but didn't recognise me. She called out, "Seth, is that you?"

I didn't reply as she might not recognise my voice.

The dog, which was probably as old as she was, wasn't barking at me anymore and continued to lie down. I noticed that she was shaking uncontrollably, and realised that she was suffering from Parkinson's Disease.

I thought about my desires for a moment, then came to the conclusion that I had come this far, I might as well get on with it. I knelt beside the dog and slit its throat. It gave a slight yelp, as blood gushed out of its throat, and it was dead.

"Seth, say something. Is that you?" she asked again and again. I didn't reply. There was only one way to do it: just to do it. I walked over to the mantelpiece, took a wrought iron book stop, walked towards the back of her, and hit her on the back of the head with it.

She made a slight sound and fell to the floor next to the dead dog. I moved her blanket and lifted her nightdress up over her body. I managed to pull her underwear off from under her, and I opened her frail and wrinkled legs and began to rape her.

I left her there, thinking I had killed her, and left the house the same way as I entered. I walked back to the YMCA, satisfied with my achievements.

The following day, I went to work around midday. I didn't speak much to Jonathan and mainly kept to myself. Maybe I felt guilty or ashamed knowing what I had done, but I wasn't about to share any of my secrets.

All were kept trapped tightly in my memories; well, that was until Michelle came to work. She appeared rather distant and wasn't her cheerful self. She unlocked her office and remained there until late in the afternoon when I heard her calling out my name.

I went to her office, and upon entering, she said, "Sit," without looking at me.

Once I was seated, she started, “John, we need to talk. I’m sorry for not telling you about my baby. She is part of who I am, and if you want to be with me again, you’ll just have to accept it. I can’t chance it,” she said sternly.

I sat there without a reply. “Look, John, I really like you. I think you’re an amazing guy, and if you’re willing to accept the fact that I have a baby, I’m sure we’ll be fine. So give it some thought and let me know if you want to be in a relationship with me and my baby.”

“Okay,” I replied, standing up and leaving her office.

I gave it a lot of thought. There were definite benefits to being involved with Michelle. Maybe I could move in with her; it would be a darn sight better than staying at the YMCA. The food was good, the house was great, and I’m sure we could be good together. I could have sex as often as I pleased, and maybe I could even change my ways. There would be no need to be a sexual predator, as my needs would all be taken care of, I thought.

I left it for two days, until I eventually decided to break the news. I walked into her office much more cheerful than I was on our last encounter and took a seat. She was at her desk completing orders with a cigarette burning in the ashtray. She looked up at me, almost startled, when I walked in and took a seat.

“Michelle,” I started. “I’m really sorry for the way I reacted. It’s just that I was so close to making passionate love to you and was startled at the cry of your baby. I hope you can forgive me, and yes, I think we could be very good together.”

I didn’t say I liked her, or loved her. I just played it low-key. Seeing more of her would just be beneficial and a step up from where I was right now. She smiled, without saying a word. I felt awkward as I was expecting her to get up from behind her desk and give me a big hug, but that didn’t happen. I walked sheepishly but excitedly out of her office.

More than a week had passed before she invited me for dinner again, and I obliged gratefully. That night, she fetched me from the YMCA in her Mercedes, and she drove me to her home. I had been there before, so I was not as impressed with the house. We drank whiskey on the sofa and chatted like we did before, but I didn’t feel the same excitement I did when I first visited her. I just played along and pretended to enjoy myself and

her company. I wanted sex and a lot of it, so I just had to bide my time. We ate dinner at the dinner table and then went upstairs. I didn't feel the passion, but I needed the sex. I didn't want foreplay; I wanted sex, and a lot of it. I fucked her so hard that night, for at least two hours, until we were exhausted but satisfied. I anticipated the baby would cry, but it didn't, thank goodness! She fell asleep in my arms.

Before the sun rose, I felt her sucking my cock. She was slow and gentle, and I was rock hard. I turned her over and fucked her from behind for about an hour. When we had finally finished, we didn't really talk. We had nothing to say to each other. I realised that she was using me for sex as much as I was using her, and that suited me just fine.

Over the next few days of spending every night with her, I realised that she craved sex as much as I did. There was nothing she had not done, and she was willing to do it all. The baby still irritated me and would cry at the most inopportune times. Our sex was interrupted, but it was conditional.

A few days later, Michelle suggested that I move in with her, and I wholeheartedly agreed. That same day, she took me to the YMCA, where I packed my belongings. I handed my room key to the receptionist, paid my rent in full, and climbed into the Mercedes with Michelle. We drove off laughing with the wind in our faces and went back to her house, which I would now call home. While I was unpacking my clothes, she came up behind me and put her hands on my pants. Moments later, we were making passionate love in the *en suite* bathroom.

As the weeks went by, she would buy me gifts. She bought me a KTM motorbike so that I could take her for rides along the coast down to Kommitjie and Houd Bay. I loved being spoiled in this way; it had never happened to me before. Life was good. I also spent less time working at the pub, and if I needed money, she would gladly give, and as much as I needed.

I tried my best to come to terms with the baby. At first, I tolerated her, as it was in my best interest to do so, but I then became more and more agitated by it. Not only was she a hindrance during sex, as Michelle would attend to her, but the crying also started to irritate me. Whenever I wanted to spend time with Michelle, she would have to run off to the baby. The

maid did take good care of her, but when she cried, I could feel Michelle tense up, and the moment was gone. She would always get up to attend to her crying baby, even though the maid had everything under control. This bullshit needed to end.

As the months went by, we had sex less frequently. Also, our rides on the motorbike weren't as frequent or as exciting. Nothing was fun anymore. Living in this big, beautiful house became a bore. The sex was still good, but it became mundane, without the passion.

The fucking baby just irritated the shit out of me. I thought that I would tolerate the baby and, in time, would get used to it, but my feelings towards it didn't change. When Michelle ran off to the baby, I just smiled at her. My disapproval was quite apparent.

In reality, I started to hate that fucking baby; it took up so much of our time, and the crying, well, maybe I just wasn't cut out for this, or maybe I harboured too many bad memories of my own. I had cried constantly, and spent most of my time locked up with the dogs. What's she got to cry about? She was spoiled as hell and lived in the lap of luxury, little brat!

One day, Michelle had to go to the pub early. The night before, there had been a fight, and the place was destroyed. She had made arrangements to meet the police and the insurance assessor there at eight-thirty. She kissed me goodbye and sped off in her Merc. I lay in bed wondering how I was going to pass my time, when the baby started to cry.

I heard the maid in the kitchen warming a bottle for her, and thought that this was the time to end my misery. I climbed out of bed, put on a pair of sleeping shorts and hurried out of our bedroom.

When I walked into Judie's bedroom, I noticed her lying on her back. She was still crying. I took her pillow and covered her face with it. The crying sounded fainter until it stopped. The baby was dead. I hurried out of the room and got back into bed.

Minutes later, I heard the maid scream; "Master, master, come and help. I think baby Judie is dead." The maid was in a terrible panic and came running into our room. I jumped out of

bed and followed her into the baby's room. Judie was lying flat on her back, and her face had turned blue.

"Quick Maria, pick her up. I'll phone the ambulance." I ran downstairs and called the ambulance, and then I called Michelle on her cell phone. I told her that something terrible had happened to Judie and that she should come home immediately. I told her that I had already called the ambulance.

The ambulance arrived at the gate within minutes, and I let them in. Two paramedics climbed out of the ambulance and rushed towards the house. One was carrying a medical bag over his shoulder. As they entered the house, I told them that the maid had found the baby in her cot this morning, and I thought she was dead.

The paramedics ran up the stairs after the maid and into Judie's bedroom. There, they found baby Judie lying on her back. They tried to resuscitate her, but she was obviously too far gone.

Just then, Michelle pulled up outside and ran into the house. She was frantic, and started shouting; "Where's my baby? What's going on?"

A paramedic called her aside and told her that her baby had died. The maid apparently found her dead in her cot. Michelle looked at the maid, who was sobbing. She had covered her face with both hands, and just nodded at Michelle.

"How did this happen?" Micelle asked through her tears. "She was fine when I left this morning. I still kissed her before I left."

I was lost for words. I tried to comfort Michelle and put my arm around her shoulders.

"Ma'am," said one paramedic. "May I have a word with you in private, please?" he asked politely.

I felt a cold shiver down my spine, and my skin turned to gooseflesh. I felt a bead of sweat form above my upper lip, as she nodded and led the paramedic into the kitchen.

When they were out of sight, the paramedic told her that they suspected foul play and thought it was wise to contact the police.

Michelle asked why they thought it was foul play, and he explained that the death was caused by asphyxiation. He explained that the baby was blue in the face, and her eyes were bloodshot. This was just his observation, but a proper and

detailed cause of death can only be determined once a post-mortem is performed. I heard Michelle burst into a loud cry, and all she said was; “Oh no, no, no. It can’t be.”

Michelle came from the kitchen with the paramedic. He advised that no one enter the bedroom where Judie lay as it was a crime scene and that the police had been summoned.

Moments later, I heard the siren of a police vehicle driving up the driveway. Two uniformed officers got out of their car and walked towards the door. The most senior greeted me and walked in.

The paramedic, who had taken charge, led the police officer upstairs. I heard another vehicle arrive, and one police officer, wearing a light blue “Crime Scene Investigator” jacket, climbed out of his vehicle. He, too, greeted, with a nod of the head, at the door and entered.

I sat with Michelle on the sofa, with my arm around her shoulders, watching as these officers performed their tasks. I tried to be as upset as I could be but knew my alibi was watertight. Michelle left me in bed, and the maid found me in bed when she cried for help. I had no idea what had happened as I had been asleep until the maid woke me.

The paramedics left first. Whilst the Crime Scene Investigator was taking photos of Judie’s lifeless little body and collecting evidence, the detectives arrived. Two males with large bellies and dark bags under their eyes entered the house. The older of the two stood at the door and said, “Afternoon, Ma’am, Sir. I’m Detective Warrant Officer Claasen, and this is Constable Mkhize. May we come in?”

I stood up from the sofa and met him at the front door. “Straight up the stairs, second door on the left,” I directed him.

Constable Mkhize took Maria to the kitchen where they could talk alone, and where he could obtain her statement in private. I sat with Michelle, trying to console her. She had her head in her hands and was crying uncontrollably.

Warrant Officer Claasen walked up the stairs to Judie’s bedroom. A few minutes later, he returned and walked over to where we sat. He sat down with a notepad on his lap and asked; “Ma’am, what is your name?

Michelle replied; ”Michelle Rossouw.” He made a note of that.

"And you, Sir?"

"My name is John Smith," I replied, with a slight quiver in my voice.

"Mrs Rossouw, I believe that you were not at home when your baby was discovered. Is that right?" he asked. His pen was ready to record her answer.

"That's right, Michelle answered. "When was the last time you saw your baby?" He asked.

"I saw her this morning before I went to my business. I kissed her goodbye, and she was fine. She was awake and staring at her mobile. Our live-in maid was preparing her bottle when I left," She reported, drying her eyes and nose with a tissue. The warrant officer recorded her explanation, almost word for word.

"And you, sir, when last did you see the baby?" he asked with a frown on his face as he stared at me over the rim of his glasses.

I didn't know what to say. I don't usually go into Judie's bedroom. I don't have anything to do with her. I hesitated and then replied as best I could, "I don't go into her bedroom, you see, I don't usually have much to do with her," I smiled at the warrant officer who recorded what I had told him.

"Sir, maybe you didn't understand my question. I asked when you last saw the baby, not when you last went into her room," he said agitatedly.

My throat was dry. The words were stuck in my throat and couldn't come out. I knew if I replied, I would start to stutter. I felt sweat run down my back, and the warrant officer just stared at me.

"Well, I suppose it was yesterday," I replied, trying to be as convincing as I could.

"And where did you see her," he asked again.

"Right here. Yes, it was right here in the lounge. I played with her on the carpet," I replied.

I could feel Michelle's eyes on me, and I could just imagine what she was thinking. Michelle knew very well that I had no time for Judie. I didn't know how to play with babies, and despite her efforts encouraging me to spend time with Judie, she knew I wasn't at all interested.

"You see, Sir, I already have a problem. Constable Mkhize is interviewing the maid, and she told him that you never spend time with the baby. So what is it? Who's lying?"

I cleared my throat and thought about how I could answer the question.

"When the maid goes to the loo, I spend time entertaining Judie," I explained, hoping the Warrant Officer would buy my story. He looked at me in disbelief, but didn't respond to my explanation.

"Mrs Roussouw, is baby Judie your baby with Mr Smith?" he asked.

Michelle shook her head and said, "No, with my ex-husband. I have custody of her."

He again recorded every word that was said.

"How long has Maria, the maid, been with you?" he asked, looking at Michelle. "She has been with me since I got married," Michelle thought for a moment, and said; "It must be four years now. She's very good with Judie, you know."

"And how long have you two been together?" the warrant officer asked.

"We have been living together for about a month now," Michelle answered before I could.

The warrant officer stood up from where he was seated and walked to the kitchen, where Constable Mkhize was obtaining an affidavit from Maria.

After a brief discussion, they agreed that there was only one suspect in this murder, and that was John Smith. Together they walked out of the kitchen, and the Warrant Officer said; "Mr Smith, I am placing you under arrest on suspicion of murder. You don't have to say anything, but if you do, it will be taken down in writing and may be used as evidence against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney, and if you cannot afford one, one may be supplied to you by the state. Do you understand?"

John was as white as a ghost. He sat there without saying a word.

"Please get dressed, 'Constable Mkhize will accompany you to your room. John rose from his seat slowly, slowly releasing Michelle's hand as he stood up. He walked up the stairs whilst being accompanied by Constable Mkhize.

Michelle also stood up and started talking to the Warrant Officer. “Do you really think he murdered Judie?” she looked at him with tears in her eyes and still wiping her nose.

“Ma’am.” He hesitated for a moment and continued, ”Yes, I’m quite sure of that, but all evidence will be tested in court,” he replied.

“Don’t you think perhaps that it was a cot death?” she sniffed again at the thought that her baby girl had been taken from her.

“No, I don’t think so, ma’am, although a post-mortem will be conducted tomorrow to determine the exact cause of death.”

“Should I arrange for my lawyer to represent John, do you think?” She enquired gently.

“That is entirely up to you, ma’am, but I wouldn’t waste my money,” he answered abruptly. Michelle wondered what he meant. She shouldn’t waste her money because the evidence against him was so strong that there was no question that he was going to be convicted, or did he mean that I shouldn’t waste my money on him because he’s a piece of shit?

Constable Mkhize led John down the stairs, placing handcuffs on him. John walked out the door without even saying goodbye to Michelle. He was totally expressionless.

Michelle then knew what the warrant officer had meant.

Constable Mkhize placed John in the back of their vehicle, and they drove off.

Michelle just stood staring at the sea. She could not believe that her life could be turned on its head in an instant. Maria came up behind her and placed her hand on Michelle’s shoulder.

They both cried.

Appendix

Vossie's Fall over the Waterfall
Near Richmond – 22 August 1982

This was reported in two of the local papers:

Boy (14) in coma after gorge fall - **Natal Mercury** Friday, August 27, 1982 Page 1.

Gorge plunge boy is on the mend. **Natal Witness**, Monday, August 30, 1982 Page 3.

Video role play of the rescuer:

This was a training film prepared to be used for training in the impending First Gulf War, demonstrating the PTSD Debriefing Model - now out of fashion – to mental health professionals.

That's me, Barry the Publisher, playing the role of a traumatised person to be debriefed. This was filmed about 8 years after Andre's fall, I was reaching for a real experience to use for the role play, and I was surprised to see that I still had some emotions about it – I'm not that good an actor. The `background to the presentation' in the video is a bit of a reach (parents concerned about my drinking, but from the description of the actual hike onwards the event is accurate.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RXZIcMEF1Hs&list=PL6VVAEgR3o3kMMVnsi6sZYUmMZJSqidcq Video filmed in 1990.

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There is a Facebook page for the TS (Training Ship) Assegai in Oribi Village, Pietermaritzburg. It includes coverage of Andre's involvement at the time, and he features in photos depicted there.